# デスマーチからはじまる異世界狂想曲

2

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Deathmarching Online
Parallel World Rhapsody

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# Death March kara Hajimaru Isekai Kyusoukyoku

# (デスマーチからはじまる異世界狂想曲)

# Death Marching to the Parallel World Rhapsody

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Story Description:

Suzuki, an adult programmer, suddenly notice that he's thrown into another world wearing a casual clothes at level 1. He gained high level and treasures after using the 3-times-disposable-magic, Meteor Shower, once. After that he intend to do another world "sightseeing tours"? Meeting 3 beast girls, beautiful purple and black haired sisters and an eccentric blond haired elf girl along with various people during his trip. Although occasionally fighting demon and demon lord, this is a heartwarming fantasy story at heart.

Original Story can be found here: Link

Transation source can be found here: Link

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Credits

# Web Novel Volume 3b

# 3-4. Little Girl and Night Turmoil

*

Satou's here. I think this is an unfortunate fate, to have an inseparable relationship with a person I'm not into.

I'd like to be together with a person of my type for once.

◇

A stark naked little girl is straddling on top of my waist.

...What the heck is this, a dream?

I've experienced similar situation with my younger cousins during a long vacation on my grandfather's home in the countryside, long ago.
The difference is that the little girl who's riding me now is naked, she doesn't have the same innocent atmosphere as my cousins.

The little girl moves bit by bit, then she greatly trembles, and snuggle against my bare chest. Her expression looks more like an adult woman rather than a little girl.

While looking very calm, I am actually really shaken inside. I'm not a lolicon okay? Absolutely!
Yet what's with this situation!

After purchasing the two from Nidoren-shi the slave trader, we were...

◇

"I will vigorously attend to master without rest, day and night."

The violet-haired little girl--Arisa said such thing during the ritual of contract. Even though Liza et al and the black-haired girl--Lulu were silent, did she want to appeal to me?

After the slave contract is finished, I pay 1 gold coin to Nidren-shi. Until the morning on the day after tomorrow, he'll be on the place earlier so he asks me to call if I ever need another slaves.

We're doing self-introductions outside the tent.

"Then, please let me introduce myself. I am from the now-extinct kingdom of Kubooku, Arisa. My age is 11 years old, there are still 4 years before I become an adult, but I'll gratefully accept to do night service even while I'm clumsy. Please cherish me forever."

While finishing the greeting with fluent words that doesn't match her age, Arisa slightly picks both end of her hem and bows. Although that's an elegant gesture, her hem is already short, coupled with her simple clothes, her lower body parts become almost naked.
And so I put my gaze to her face and simply reply "Please take care of me too, my name is Satou."

"...I'm Lulu desu. 14 years old desu. Born in Kubooku kingdom desu. Since I'm plain looking and thin... I'm not fit to be your partner at night, but I'll work hard like a horse... so please don't abandon me."

Lulu introduces herself while looking down and covers her face with her bangs. That clear voice isn't the type for seiyuu but it's a good voice with soprano feeling. It would have been better if it was not accompanied with trembling.

Though the person herself said thin, she looks to probably be B-cup, being B-cup at 14 years old is quite promising for the future I think, or is this world is of the big-breast faction?  As long as it's soft, anything is fine!

Putting that aside, for this beautiful girl to say that she's ugly, that's too much even for humility. Covered with bangs, she looks like Sadako, but if I was to compare her with a beauty contest winner I've seen on TV back then, she would win with a big margin, that's how orthodoxly beautiful her face is.
Frankly said, she's my type. If her personality is agreeable, then I would think of proposing her when she turns 20.

I wonder if Arisa and Lulu don't have any prejudice against demi-human, even after the beastkin girls took off their hoods, they don't show any disgust. Although Lulu looks afraid of Liza, I don't sense any feeling of disgust. Do people from other kingdom not dislike demi-human?
Pochi and Tama initially act shy around stranger, but since Arisa and Lulu act normally to them, they immediately become familiar.

"Well then, let's get back to the inn."

I call out to the five and we return back to the street. Arisa smoothly and naturally clings to my left arm. The remaining other is being contested by Pochi and Tama. Since it doesn't seem that it's going to end, Liza carry both of them in both of her arms like luggages. Seemingly giving up, the two quiet down after their hand and legs are in the air ...so they like that pose.

Kyurukyurukyu~~.

A cute sound resounded. When I look back, Lulu blushes. Figure of bashful beautiful girl is lovely. I don't think of her as a romantic interest now, but I'm looking forward to the future.

A lot of stalls exude good smells but there aren't many customers. It seems that the auction has started, so the riches and the curious onlookers who want to look at beautiful slaves have flowed there.

Since it's convenient, we go to a stall with tables. I bought chicken soups and flat breads, assorted intestines and vegetables, and enough meat skewers for this number of people. I ended up buying a lot of meat skewers.

"Itadakimasu." and so the meal starts.

After the beastkin girls started eating, the two newcomers follow. Arisa stuffs herself with meat skewers, saying, "Ah~ Proteins after a long time♪" while holding her check. So this world has the concept for nutritions too huh, I ignore that while enjoying the scenery of the meal with everyone. Lulu eats with all her might while still being reserved. But, the two's eating pace is slow compared to the other four, so they didn't eat much from the big combined platter. Next time, let's divide some small portions for them first.

Since I'm not really hungry, I finished my meal in the middle but since Arisa and the beastkin girls doesn't look like they've had enough, I order for more intestines and vegetables platters.

"Continue your meal as it is, I'm going to buy cloaks and shoes at the stall for a bit."

"L, let me go, if it's for shopping" "I will go"

Lulu and Liza stand up. Pochi and Tama stop chewing at the meat, and look here if only their eyes.

"Everyone keep eating as you are, this is an『Order』you know."

I could have gone when the meal is over, but I keep accidentally see Lulu's breast who sit in front of me, I can't calm down. I can clearly see the nipple of Arisa who's sitting beside her, but I don't care with that one.

I give cheap cloaks and sandals to the two, bought from the vicinity. Soon after, the five eat through their plates leaving not even bread crumbs, so we go back to the inn.

>[Service Skill Acquired]

◇

Just like Zena-san said, the inn refuses to let demi-human enter. However, Martha-chan makes a bed from new straws inside the barn for the sake of the three, Pochi and Tama are overjoyed and even Liza reservedly gives thank. I wonder if it's warm to sleep on the straw covered with the blankets from the labyrinth.

I take out the cookwares and foods from among the lot bags of the labyrinth, and leave it to Liza. I also put the short swords of Pochi and Tama inside.
It's forbidden to equip demi-human with arms inside the town, but since it's the things taken from labyrinth for self-protection, it's probably fine. As for the foods, "You can eat if you're hungry okay.", I give permission to Liza. With this, I can wake up late tomorrow (lol).

Lulu is going to sleep here together, since the inn accepts them anyway, it's better to sleep inside the room.

I tried to book an additional room from the landlady but there was no free room, so it was decided to add a spare bed in my room.

Since the room is wide being originally a twin room, even after two beds occupy it, it doesn't feel cramped.

I make Arisa and Lulu to sleep together on the new bed, and I sleep on my own bed.
Inside the labyrinth, for the sake of letting the beastkin girls rest, I was the sole watch guard so I didn't even take a wink of sleep. Is it because of that my eyelids feels heavy.

I surrender myself to drowsiness, and sleep after a long while.

◇

And so we fly back to the beginning.

Why am I sharing a bed with a little girl?!

Calm down Satou! Let's cool down here.

Arisa who notices me wake up says "You're awake?" mischievously while whispering and uselessly kisses me.
While receiving that, I comb her hair...

No, wait! I should have pushed her!
...I'll be branded a lolicon if this continue.

Arisa does not stop with my mouth, she kisses my ear, collarbone and chest in turn. Her small hands lightly, very lightly caress.
Respoding to that, I gently stroke her nape...

Why---! I don't feel like myself.

Arisa captures my hairless chest, putting her check on my thinly cracked abs while her finger is crawling.
Feelng that lovely actions, I feel like it's okay to let her violate... me?

This thought is strange. No matter how you look at it, there's something wrong.

My blurred mind become a bit clear. I operate the menu with thought, and make the log display ON. Found it in the log!

I slowly raise my body, lift Arisa who looks here, and put my face on her nape.
Arisa hugs my head while panicking for a bit...

Close to her ears, I『Order』gently but firmly.

"Arisa. I forbid the use of magic and skill. This is an order!"

Arisa loosens her hands, and looks at me with a shocked and distorted face.

"Furthermore, cancel the effect of magic and skill that you've used on me. This is an order!"

The order seems to be accepted, the log shows the cancellation of magic effect. The information displayed on AR changed too.
Just in case, I get the [Mind Resistance] skill which comes out in the log to maximum. It seems that I also got [Mind Magic], but it's fine for now.

"Why..."
"Isn't that my line? Using mind magic on me, what's your goal?"

Yes, the time when I bought her and just before this, she was using

magic. The first one was [Charm Person] and [Fret] magic, and a little while ago [<<Temptation Field>>] and [Heat Heart] were used.
When I used appraisal skill her skill was [None] but the first time I see her the AR displayed [Unknown]. If only I remember earlier...

"...Even if master said I'm using mind magic"
"I also forbid the act of deceiving and playing dumb. This is an order, state your goal."

I close her escape route and press for answer.

>[Questioning Skill Acquired]

Alright, let's allocate point and activate it. Let's make the level to be 3 for now.

"I repeat, don't lie and speak your goal."

She seems to have resigned and answers truthfully. She stops using polite language.

"...my goal was to become master's slave."
"And the goal for the second one?"
"I wanted to serve master."

She becomes a bit sulky while saying it.

"I don't understand the point, talk a bit more clearly."
"Mou! like I said. I fell in love with you when I first saw you. That thin and soft looking black hair! that defenseless expression! That outlandish baby-face! That delicate-looking body! If such a person is to become my master! And even though such dreamy boy was before my eyes, he was going to plainly pass by! I can't forgive that! That's why I used magic! To be purchased!"

She piles up her words like a machine gun. Since she looks a bit desperate, I keep listening.

"So, after you've been bought, you intend to brainwash me then?"
"No! Completely false!  I've said『I will vigorously attend to master without rest, day and night』when I became your slaves right!  That's why I seduced master since it's slave's job to make her master feel good!"

What kind of reasoning is that?  It doesn't look like she's just lying to get through troublesome thing.

"I understand the facade, so what's your true intention?"
"Even though I was waiting for master to call me, you really went asleep... Since it can't be helped, I slip into your bed, and when I see your sleeping face, it's just irresistible~."

It's a tehee face. I'm a bit perturbed so I pull her cheeks. This much punishment is okay right?

"huuwt, it's huuwwt. iuainohahahyanorokirakenihite~."

This thin cheek sure can stretch. It's fun but since the corner of her eyes are tearing up, I stop.

"Even though I did my best to control myself in the beginning~"
"Then was it because you lose to your lust that you attacked?"

"That's right." so she nods.

"Really, just what are you..."

The AR displays these.

Name : Arisa
Age : 11 years old
Title : [Satou's Slave] [Witch of the Lost Kingdom] [Mad Princess]
Skill : [Mind Magic]
Gift (Innate Skills) :
[Self Status]
[Status Check]
[Hide Skill]
[Item Box]
Special Ability (Ability) :
[Never Give Up]
[Over Boost]

Good grief, it's full of skills I've never seen before.

Arisa answers me teasingly.

"I am Tachibana Arisa, just like you, a Japanese."

# 3-5. The Japanese in Different World

*

Satou's here. The typical Japanese who becomes so happy when they meet another Japanese in a foreign country, he let his guard down, Satou.

Since we're speaking the same language, and because our sense of value and foundation are close, I become relieved.

◇

"To be exact, Tachibana Arisa as the former Japanese who was reincarnated in Kubooku kingdom with her memory intact. Were you reincarnated too?  No, judging from that black hair, you're a summoned hero aren't you? Satou-san?"

The AR doesn't display whether she's a originally a Japanese or her real name, Tachibana Arisa.
Since my stats didn't state if I'm a former Japanese, Suzuki Ichirou too, is it the same situation?

"What's wrong, why did you stop talking? You're the second Japanese human that I've meet."

Hearing that words, my gaze turns toward Lulu who's sleeping in another bed.

"Lulu is different you know? It seems that her great-grandfather was a Japanese man, though I've never meet him, mind.  Atavism is a cruel thing.  She could have been an idol if she was born in Japan."

"Your mind magic-"It's not""

Did she use mind magic to make Lulu looks ugly, I thought of that but she denied my word.

"This world's sense of beauty think that those who have flat face with thin lips, non-white skin, and small ass as the ideal. She has a lot of those counterpoints. Though thanks to that there weren't many buyers during our slavery days."

The type of beauty change depending on the time and place huh... that's unfortunate.

"So then, Satou-san, are you a reincarnated person or a summoned person?"
"Are there distinctions for them?"

Should I honestly talk or should I keep it a secret?
She's a mind magic user who didn't hesitate to force her way but she's also undoubtedly a clue. If the time comes for it, I can just order her to『Don't speak of this to other』.

"Reincarnated person is a person who died on their former world, then reborn in this world. Summoned person is a person who is forcibly abducted from their world to this one. Someone like hero is a summoned person."

Though it was an explanation coated with prejudice, I'm neither of those, aren't I?

"Does a reincarnated person always reborn as a baby?"
"There's a legend where they reborn already in adulthood, but in this world a reincarnated person will always be reborn as a baby without fail."

She's very decisive about it. When I try to confirm it.

"Reincarnated persons are told that by the god as they're reincarnating."

So they meet god? If a person is saying such things in Japan, people will doubt his sanity.

"Do summoned persons retain their original appearances?  Like their clothes, belongings and figure."
"It seems that the summoned person retain their clothes. And of course, their figures too."

So even their figures are kept, but I became younger, why is that?

"Did you hear it from others?"
"The hero-sama from Saga Empire said so, I don't think it's wrong. Since the only one who could summon heroes from another world is Saga Empire."

Then if I go to Saga Empire, I could find out the way to go home? Let's not forget to check it later.

"I see, but I'm neither of those. I took a nap after works, when I woke up, I was already in a wasteland."
"You didn't see the god?"
"Nope."

Arisa crosses her arms and groans. Put some clothes on already.

"Then, did you get to the summoner's place when you came to this world?"
"No, I was the only one on that wasteland."
"Then were you high-level from the start? Or had infinite magic power? Or got a lot of interesting skills?"

"My level was 1 in the beginning, my magic was also only 10. I didn't have any skills too."

...No, there was that Special Abilty (Ability). Like the Meteor Shower.

"What's with that, impossible game?"

Oops, she's sympathizing with me, what to do if she finds out?

"Rather than me, it's about you. Tell me all your skills one by one. The Gift and the Ability too. Just you know, this is an『Order』."
"I will tell you even without an order you know."

"First, Mind magic is at level 5. Aren't me quite good?  I've dedicated the skill points I acquired post-birth for this one."

Since it sounds strange, when I check it, the required points to level for each skills are 2-12 point with an average of 7 (Represented with 2d6 in her case), the required point to level up a skill isn't 1 but different values for each of those skills, it seems that the required point also increases as the skill level increases.
Am I a special case, or is there any specific condition?

"Self-Status is a skill to check my own status. It's more detailed than Yamato Stone. The most important function of this skill is that I can decide which skill I allocate the point I got from level ups."

From what she's saying, she can choose which skill she allocates the point to, it seems that this is a skill that every reincarnated and summoned person always have.
I thought that it's the same special ability that allows me to learn skills easily, but it's actually an inferior version of it instead...

As for the general populace, seems that they have probability to

remember skill depending on their training as they level up.
"Status Check is a skill to see other people's stats. It's convenient~. It'd have been better if it was Analyze, but my Privileged-Reincarnation point wasn't enough."

It seems to be a skill which have the same effect as Yamato Stone.
Similar skills are like [Weapon Check], [Armor Check], [Gem Check], [Coin Check], [Plant Check], etc, and the skill that comprise them all is Analyze.
Privileged-Reincarnation is the point that the god gave her when she reincarnated, she says.

"Hide Skill is a skill used to hide your own skill. Once used, even if you were looked by Analyze or Yamato Stone, it'll show『Skill None』, until it's canceled."

My AR shows [Skill Unknown], which mean that it's from different branch than Analzye, is it?

"Item Box, it's just as the name imply. It's the same kind of storage that usually exist in a game. Though it's not the same as the one heroes get with their infinite storages (Inventory), the store-able number is limited but it doesn't add to the bulk and there's no weight, it's really convenient~."

From what I heard, the item number limit is 100, and it can stack up to 100 piece of the same item. For things that has indeterminate shape, like water, it's counted per liter.
My storage is more similar to the infinite storage (Inventory) one, if I have to compare.

After saying that much, Arisa says "My throat is a bit thirsty.", then she theatrically swing her hand horizontally and recites "Item Box, Open".
In front of her, a black hole open on level surface, then she puts her hand

inside and took out a water jug which she drinks directly. Her face seen from the side looks so triumphant.
The water she drink is spilling from her mouth and draw lines on her naked chest, looking inappropriately erotic. How old is this girl inside?

"At least use a cup.", I asked, but it seems putting things in and out each requires magic power to do, so she's minimizing doing those to the lowest.
It also works slightly different to my Storage. When she finished drinking water, she wanted to put the jug back, so I let her. How do I say this, if a clueless person saw it, it'll look like someone is putting things inside a black box.

>[Item Box Skill Acquired]

I don't need such inferior version of Storage...
Rather than that, the remaining are [Never Give Up] and [Over Boost], which one of those that let her mind magic to pass over the 300 level differences, I want to know.

"Fufufun, how about it, am I not amazing? There's rarely a slave that has this much skills!"
"Aren't there others too?"

"Ugh" she faltered, "Mou, you're really greedy~" while she pompously hold both her hands up like a gaijin.
[TLN: Gaijin means foreigner, yes I'm just messing with ya (though the author did put that line). :p]
I give a chop to her head.

"I'm against violence!  the others are, unique skills, two of them even!"

Amazing isn't it?  And since she once again start posing, I'm stroking her head roughly "My hair falls into disorder~", even though she's saying that she looks a bit happy.

"Even Lulu doesn't know these abilities. One is called Over Boost. By using all of my magic power and stamina, the effect of one attack will be raised by many folds? It's exactly the ability fit for a heroine~."

A disposable cannon it is.

"The other one is Never Give Up. It's a power to absolutely never give up no matter how powerful the enemy is!  More concretely, no matter how much the level differences or the defense power of the enemy is, an attack or magic will hit with 10% probablity!  Isn't it great~."

"However it can only be used 3 times. Once I used them all, it'll recover one for every month. Since my magic did not really work against master, I've spent all three them."

It was probably this skill that had put me under her magic. There are a lot of [~magic resisted] entries in the log, so it's doubtless.
What a troublesome skill. I should be glad that she's not an enemy, is it?

This is something that I heard later, but it seems that even if this skill is in effect, it's useless against an opponent who has complete resistance. For example, the elementary Water Shoot is ineffective against a Great Water Spirit who's immune against water magic.

◇

"There are several things I want to confirm."
"Go ahead~."
"How did you use mind magic without chanting?"
"Umm~n, it's a hidden function of Self-Status, once I remember a magic, then I can use that magic just by reading the last line of the Command Words in my head."

I expected something, but it's a memorization, I really have to successfully chant it at least once. Is there really no shortcut...

"Are you perhaps unable to use magic?"
"I'm failing to properly chant the spells..."

Yep, it's not a lie. I could use two, but those are quite irregulars.

"That's right eh~ I was going to give up when I heard other people's chants too. Eventually I managed to in one and half a year."
"That's right, I've only challenged it for two days, though it's actually two hours."
"What, that's too short~ If one could do it within that period then there would be more magicians."

Since it's getting colder, she's hugging me while saying that but I tear her off me, she falls off the bed and I throw her clothes and the bed cover below.

◇

"I forgot to ask. Who's the first Japanese human you met?"
"Don't use 'you', call me Arisa~."

"Answer me, Arisa."

Arisa unnaturally accumulate her words, and says.

"That's the Saga Empire's hero, Hayato Masaki."

# 3-6. Hero and the Taboo Girl

*

Satou's here. Heroes are enough just being in games, Satou who think that.

How many games out there with heroes in them...

◇

"I see, so the second one is the hero from Saga Empire."

I really don't want to get involved with him. If I carelessly got in touch, I could got tangled in demon lord's extermination.

"Yes, with a face that doesn't look like a 18 years old, although he is handsome, and with hair sticking out on his macho body."
"No, I don't care about his appearance, how is his personality?"
"He's a perverted gentleman (lolicon). When we first met, 『YES! Lolita, NO! Touch.』, he loudly yelled that, and then got beaten up by his women attendants."
[TLN: YES and NO are written in alphabet in the original text.]

Arisa said with white eyes.

"Isn't he the same kind as you (shota)?"
"I used to be like that a long time ago, but it's different now!  I'll whisper with all my might that I love boy now!"

Please spare me the whisper.

"...Or rather, since you like boy (shota), isn't a 15 years old outside the scope?"
"Ara! That's not true!  I mean you still don't have an adam's apple, your chin is still smooth even at this hour, and your voice hasn't become strange right? And  I've seen it just now, even your legs haven't grown with hairs, it's really smooth isn't it!!!!"

Arisa kicks the bed cover, and stands up while roaring.
I can see various things, so please stop doing imposing stance while you're naked. Or rather, put on some clothes already.

"Okay I understand your enthusiasm, but wear something before I order you already."
"Yes, yes, I know."

She's too excited she's gasping when she answers while wearing clothes.
And when you're going to sit back don't do it on my lap.
...I somehow feel like my chastity is in danger.

"The talk strays off to far, I'm not interested with his fetish but his personality."
"Right~ He's a straightforward justice-minded fool, I guess?  If people said『That is evil』, he will directly confront it without even uttering a word of doubt, that kind of type. Originally there was a staff-officer-type glasses-wearing girl around him, but since she was needed in the noble bureaucracy, I don't think she'd participate in the war."

It's a type I'm not good against.
I have a friend who's like that too, those kind of types will drag you into their problem without even hearing your circumstances. I think I always got involved.

"Since he's a hero, he's surely strong isn't he?"
"Seems like it~ I didn't see him fighting, but it seems that he was already

level 50 when he got summoned."
"Did you not check his skill when you met him?"
"Of course I did. His level was 61 with point mostly on basic sword and spear skill and a lot of various other skills. If you're interested I could write down the ones I remember for you."
"Ah, I'm counting on you."

I'll buy paper and pen when the dawn comes.

"However, I don't know about his unique skills okay?"
"You couldn't see it even with Status Check?"
"Yep, I couldn't. It seems to be an ability of the holy armor he got from Saga Empire, I don't understand why he didn't hide his skills too then."

Indeed. Is it a problem of cost, or is it deliberate to make his opponents let their guard down?
I guess the reason doesn't matter for now.

"But the person himself gave me a hint. Do you want to hear it?"
"Yes, I do."
"『My unique skills are contradictions』 there"

Like that, it's still useless~ says Arisa while laughing.
If he's like Han Feizi then it's fine, but if our ideas can't match then his ability could be problematic.
[TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Han_Fei]

Alright, if it seems like we got into a situation where we would fight, let's run with all my might!

◇

I'm at disadvantage at the war on my lap.

Since she looks like a children, it's hard to hit her. Though if she jump on me, I intend to grip and throw her off...
Arisa pretends to be sleepy and leans on me with her back.

"Boy, the things you wanted to hear, is it over?"
"You're breaking your character you know?"

Arisa strokes my chin with her fingers.

"Onii-chan, I'm sleepy. Won't you hold me tight until morning?"
"How sly!"

I scoop her up my lap and roll her over next to Lulu.

"I forgot, since when did you notice my identity?"
"If I have to say, from the beginning."

I'm shocked. I thought I had conducted myself well.

"Since you have that Japanese face, I had an incline from the beginning."
"Isn't that too weak for affirmation?"

"The second one was『Itadakimasu』. There's no such speech in this world."
[TLN: Thank you for the meal]

Arisa put up two finger while talking.

"The third was『Protein』. Nutritions only come out in a few books since the era of Yamato-san, most people don't know about it. Furthermore, I said『Protein』fully in Japanese, but you ignored, didn't you?"

I was careless...

"And the fourth."

"There's still more?!"
"The next one is the last. When the thing about me being a Japanese came out, weren't you upset?  You should have set a poker face and asked back, what's a Japanese? instead."

So I was completely caught in her bluff...

"I'm sorry, actually there's one more."

She points at my trunks, "A trunks made from synthetic material with a washing tag attached, there is absolutely no such thing in this world", and she laughs.

◇

"Next, tell me the contents of your item box. It'd be bad if I was killed when I'm asleep if you take out knife or poison from it."

I'm not forgetting to check for potentially dangerous situation.

"Umm～ 『Mind Magic』 related, five magic books."

She piles it up on top of the bed.

"If you've sold this books, wouldn't it be enough to buy yourself back?"

"Slaves belongings, if taken, it's the end. Besides, if they knew that the writing is about the detested mind magic, I don't know what they'd do..."

"Isn't it better to learn other magic?"

"Only this was available. If there were magic I wanted to know, I had to

learn it by myself."

I know that feeling well.

"The remaining ones are just the water jug from a while ago, and various clothes, do I have to take them out too?"

"Ah, take them out. You don't have to for the water jug."

I got a headache after seeing the clothes Arisa took out. Yukata, sailor uniform, and unfinished maid clothes... It seems that they're all hand-made. She doesn't have tailoring skill but it was her specialty before reincarnating.

I take memos for only the titles of the magic books, and allowed all the things back to the item box.

"You won't take it?"
"I want to read the magic books next time, but I don't have any intention to take them."

I tell the slightly dubious Arisa clearly.
I'd be treated as a pervert if I carry around little-girl-sized sailor and maid uniforms after all.

◇

After pulling myself together, I ask for the last question.

"Why did you make me buy not only yourself but Lulu too?"
"Since she's my older sister. Lulu is my half-sister."
"That's why you want to be together huh..."

Arisa goes to the bed and pat Lulu's hair, while looking sad, she talks.

"It's not just that. Master won't scorn Lulu despite how she looks right? Even in our hometown, servants were talking about how ugly she is behind her back."
"Even though she's this beautiful..."
"I think so too. Moreover, I was in the same situation. Don't you think that my violet hair and iris unusual?"

Arisa lifts her hair with both her hands and looks here.

"Ah, I haven't seen it beside on some stylish grandma's dye."
"D, don't put me together with such things..."

Arisa becomes crestfallen, but she's immediately back on her feet and continues.

"Violet hair and iris are considered to be bad omens, although there are few people who know the reason, if anything bad happen then they will be accused of being responsible for everything."

Is that why she was unsold?  Is her [Witch of the Lost Kingdom] title due to that too?

"Could you tell me the reason why you became a slave? This isn't an order. If you don't want to tell me then you don't have to."

Arisa is at loss for a bit, but pieces by pieces, she begins to talk.

# 3-7. Past, Failure and Withered Labyrinth

*

Satou's here. There are many tragedies where the hero doesn't come to save the day.

In fantasy world, I would have liked if it's a happily ever after end.

◇

"I failed to make my hometown prosperous using the knowledge from my previous life."

"Even if I'm like this, I was a princess you know." said Arisa ironically.

"In the beginning it was working well, but then it began to be failing unnaturally and the kingdom became ruined, plunged into civil war, and occupied by the neighboring kingdom in the end."

"What did you do?"
"Just normal agricultural reforms. Like making fertilizers from leaves and manures, four-wheeled farming tools, some basic administration cheats."

I've never heard 'Administrative Cheats' lingo, but I put the pieces together from the administrative and reform parts.

"Even if you fail, could that even ruin the whole kingdom?"
"That's why I said『Unnatural』. The mountain where we collected leaves for fertilizer died off. A massive insect monsters outbreak came out of fertilizer which was fermenting, planted clovers and turnip which should had restored the land, withered it instead."

Indeed, those were some fantasy-like phenomenons, but if we add 『Unnatural』 to this, that means....

"Someone was interfering, was it?"
"Yes, but I only knew long after the fact. At that time, I thought it was because of the difference between the earth and this world, I was really depressed. I even got called [Witch of the Lost Kingdom], or [Mad Princess]."

So those titles were because of this.
It wasn't because she used mind magic to manipulate the king to create a harem of pretty boys for her or something huh.

"Still, if the intention was to occupy your kingdom, if the neighbor kingdom didn't gain any profit, there was no meaning to it, isn't it? Laying waste to the other kingdom to get it, didn't they get their priority backward?"
"They didn't care at all for territories of a poor country. They probably just wanted the [Withered Labyrinth] below the castle."

◇

"After our country was occupied, they made a public execution of the king and the crown prince for the sake of calming down the populace."

Tears are falling out of her frustrated face.

"Then the remaining princes and princesses were gathered, and they said this."

『This country was destroyed because of your foolishness. You people are

not qualified to be royal families.』

"They made the court magicians to put coercion(geass) on the princes and princesses, starting from me."

『Live as a slave until you die』

"I was blaming myself for the destruction of the country, so I willingly received that geass and became a slave."

I take out a handkerchief from the storage using under-bed as a cover, and wipe her tears.

"Why was it had to become slaves..."
"It was for the sake of reviving the『Withered Labyrinth』I told you earlier. We couldn't escape if we became slaves, since it was geass and not contract, only a country is able to cancel that..."

She grasps the handkerchief along with both of my hands, and continues.

"Every month, when it was full moon, they sacrificed one person in a suspicious ceremony inside the labyrinth's interior."

"One year later, the labyrinth was resurrected. When the ceremonies were over, only me who had the taboo hair and Lulu, who was an illegitimate child remained. Our confinement was moved from tower to the royal villa near it. I don't know why they didn't dispose of us right away. But we were probably spares if the labyrinth ever to wither again."

Her grips are loosing its strength.

"And then, another tragedy struck when the next full moon happened. A demon appeared, the castle and the town surrounding it were destroyed. The royal villa where we were, was burned down too, I and Lulu ran took

refuge to the mountain."

Arisa was forbidden to go out by Order, but when the castle was destroyed, their master seemed to have died in it, thanks to that they were able to escape from the villa.

"I thought that we have no choice but to be burnt to dead but Lulu's indication became『Master: None』, thanks to that. If I was alone, then I'd have died just like that."

Arisa puts my arms to embrace her and sits on my lap. Since she's trembling a bit in my arms, I let her off.

"Then we just wandered around in the mountain, and just as we were about to die, we got picked up by the wandering slave trader, Nidoren-shi. Since slaves who don't have master can't enter into towns. So I wouldn't be sold to some perverted nobles, I used Hide Skill to hide my skills and Lulu also pretended to have loss of speeches."

She lean her small head to my arm, her expression isn't visible.

"Wouldn't it better if you used mind magic to make Nidoren-shi to treats you two like daughters?"

"That's right. I was too desperate to hide my skills, when I realized that, I was already under the Contract to be Nidoren-shi's slave."

"You could just use the magic after that."

"I could have died if I was careless trying to do that and violated the contract."

Hmm? Wait a minute.
I make Arisa to face me.

"Didn't you just abuse your magic to push me down earlier? Why was the contract not violated?"

She looks up to me and smiles wryly.

"Because that's a service from a slave. I properly made the oath during the contract, right?"

『I will vigorously attend to master without rest, day and night』

"That's why I use every ounce of myself, including magic, to service you!"

She puts her hands on my side while looking like expecting something, "So embrace me~, indulge yourself on my unripe body~", while trying to hug me, I shoot her down with a chop.

◇

"By the way, who was that demon?"

"I don't know. I didn't directly see the demon. Only heard it from Nidoren-shi's talk with other merchants. I only knew that the town around the castle was burned down and it went somewhere after. Maybe it came to steal the revived labyrinth."

Is it like the arm demon, gathering power in the labyrinth?
I talk about it to Arisa.

"So the uproar that Nidoren got involved into, was about labyrinth?!"

Her face is close.

Bracing myself, I push back the oncoming Arisa, while talking about the demon raid's disturbance, the arm demon's making of the labyrinth, summarizing them all. The silver masked hero was omitted.

"You mean a new labyrinth was made?"
"Seems like it."

Is it a point to be surprised about?

"There are only 6 living labyrinths in this continent. The last labyrinth which appeared, did so 100 years ago. A labyrinth will appear in the place where the corpse of demon lord is, that's what written in books."

"That arm demon said that it was created for the sake of the complete resurrection, so I thought that it was just a recovery type shelter item."

"It's not such a cheap thing. That's a Legend class artifact item. I wonder what's the objective..."

"To produce demons to fight the hero maybe?"

Ignoring my nonchalant answer, Arisa ponders with serious face.
I'm alright with you hanging your hands on my shoulders, but please stop circling my waist tightly with your legs.

"Are there earth veins around this area?"
"It seems there's one called Dragon's Valley."

She says that with serious face while looking up... Fine, but why are you pressing your thin breast?

"If the arm demon's goal was to recover one arm, then probably it should have been over. I think full recovery would take many months. It could probably move around in its former form in short period."

"And that thing is underneath our feet, chilling~", she's shaking.

I don't know how long is short period, but Zena-san et al who are on the labyrinth's entrance are in danger.

"You're awfully knowledgeable."

Almost like Nadi-san.

"I've read most of the books in the castle's library."

"The letter printing in this world is really small you know~", Arisa outraging.

"Do you know? When you read books and gain new knowledges, you accumulate experience points~ Thanks to that, my level went up even while secluding myself in castle."

I see, this isn't a game after all, you can gain level even without going in battles.

◇

"Tell me if you know this."
"Of course~ Master~."

While rubbing your face against my chest, don't grope it with your fingers.

"In this world, to fight against a level 62 demon, how much force would you need?"

"What are the level of the best pieces you can prepare?"
"Around 48."
"Then if you equip them with 6 holy attribute weapons and the party balance is good, you can win~"
"There aren't 6 of them. Level 48 magician is one person, upper 40 are 3 people, and lower 40 are 2."
"It will be harsh, but if there are 10 level 30 people as back ups in turns, then I think, they could somehow do it. Although there probably would be many sacrifices."

She stops playing with her fingers and looks over here.

"Master, you sure know a lot about this town's forces. Aren't you a merchant?"
"I know an acquaintance in military. Also, although I call myself a merchant, I've never done any commercial business."

"Master can afford 5 slaves regardless."
"Well yeah, I got a lot of magic cores from the labyrinth after all, I won't have money trouble for a while."

The moneys are actually things I pillaged from the dragons, but it seems it'd be troublesome so I just mislead her here.

I grab her hands which were playing around on my chest above, seemingly misunderstanding something, she closes her lips shut and attempts to kiss me.
I push her back, peel her body off me, and lay her beside Lulu.

◇

I put on cheap robe and cloak, and going out of the room.

"Where are you going~", hearing that, "Sleep until morning", I『Ordered』Arisa that and got out of the room.

# 3-8. Masked Hero

*

Satou's here. I've played around imitating a transforming hero when I was a child but I didn't think that I would really stuck to be one.

◇

I come back to the labyrinth. Covered in blond haired silver masked hero style (lol).
I left the beastkin girls to rest in the inn, so I'm alone. Since Pochi and Tama aren't here I activate the [Trap Release] skill.

Opening the map, I mark the course to where the arm demon should be located.
Alright, with this I won't have to check the map every time I reach a junction.

I proceed for a bit while having the trap discovery skill finds the trap locations. I somehow know where the trap is before the AR indicate it.
I put force to my jump, flying over the trap.

It seems that there are 5 skeleton soldiers in the room ahead. Since pulling out sword is tedious, I just kick them.
The skeleton soldiers are blown away to near the wall in tatters, but they immediately get back up.

"Oh dang, that skill was still disabled."

I open the skill screen on the menu and tap [Fighting]. Not the level but the name. [Fighting Lv 10], the indicator changed from gray to white. I disabled it in order to not beat the people at the downtown back then to

death, after I got the abduction skill. It seems that abduction skill has non-killing effect, that's convenient.

I kick an approaching skeleton. The kick hit the torso part blowing it away like it was shot, and sink it into the wall. The skeleton soldier who has lost its torso pauses for a bit, then it flies backward as if being pulled. Many other skeleton soldiers get entangled and destroyed.
I kick the only remaining skeleton lightly. It doesn't get blown away like it was shot like earlier, but it flies to hit the wall while breaking up.

"I should make sure not to forget to turn off fighting skill before I get back to the town..."

Since it'd take a lot of time if I throughly beat all enemies, I decided to fight only the one who blocks my path.

Jumping over the traps, kicking the enemies around, while galloping through the labyrinth.
I got into the life drain trap once, but it only rob a small portion of my stamina.

However, there's a place where I'm forced to stop my feet.

◇

『Thou hast to answer my question if thy wish to continue』

That's what written on the gate. Riddle huh, this is also a labyrinth classic.

『Shonimu is righting the tree, Dareson is eating the fruit, Yurato is planting the seed. Correct our right position.』

Yep, I dunno.
Therefore I decided to do the brute force way.

I take out a sledgehammer from storage, and hit it. Hit. Hit. Hit.

"Is it no good? No wait, I haven't enabled the hammer skill branch."

I allocate points to [Two-Handed Hammer] skill and activate it.

...I somehow understand that it's useless even if I continue to hit it. Is this an effect of the skill too?

I stop minding about it and swing the sledgehammer with all my might! The handle breaks, and the tips fly to the other end of the room. The door becomes a bit recessed but that's it.

"This door would be a hot sale if I take it home."

I'm considering to ignore the door and just dig through the wall, but referencing the map it looks like it would take some time to finish.

"Should I rely on magic items with unknown effects?"

The frequency of talking to myself increased.
Unfortunately there is no other way around. I have also checked the pit, but there is none that goes to the other side of this door.

I don't have any choice but to deal with the riddle, but this is the type that requires you to know the preamble first.

"Tree, fruit and seed huh... There are some suspicious looking animal pictures, but there are nothing with trees."

I'm at a loss.

"『What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three in the evening?』, If only it was like that~"

That's right!
I take a pick from Storage, and use it to carve something on the wall.

『What is the creature that walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon and three in the evening?』

『It's Man』

>[DeRiddle Skill Acquired]

Thank you Sphinx! I don't know the one who answered that, but thanks for you too!

I'm pouring DeRiddle skill with point to the max, and activate it.

Shonimu, Dareson, Yurato, I still don't know what are they. However I knew which of the suspicious looking animal picture correspond to which name.
And, I somehow know that the tree, the fruit and the seed aren't in this room.

"Skill get, easy victory~ I thought it'd be like that~"

Despite being disappointed, is this sensation thanks to DeRiddle skill?  I understand that there are still more that need to be done to solve this riddle. I don't know concretely how but...

In a game, it's common for key items to be located in different rooms, I search for rooms with strong-looking enemies on the map.

There are 3 blatantly suspicious rooms, furthermore each have enemies clearly higher-leveled than normal.

"Truly game-like eh~"

I try seeing the closest room. The room's floor is depressed except at the center. On the depression, tree root-like creatures are wriggling around. There's a pedestal in the center of the room, a statue is put on top of it. That's most likely a key item for the riddle.

It seems to be impossible to jump to the pedestal with a single leap. That said, I don't want to land on that wriggling things.
The AR indicate that it's called Wandering Roots, since it's a colony life form it looks like even if I shoot it directly with the magic gun and destroy its external, it still won't die, there'll be no end to it.

That's why I use the molotov bombs I made back then. Since I've activated Fire Resistant skill, my body probably would be fine. If the wig got burned, my disguise will be blown, so I pour the water bottle from the top of my head. With this it won't get burned easily.
I ignite the molotov with the igniter magic tools (Tinder Rod). I casually throw five ignited bottles, and after checking that it's burning nicely, I jump into the fire!

"Like I can!"

Impossible impossible impossible!  Even if I know that my body won't burn, it's still impossible.

Comparatively the live trees are burning nicely. I can see that the smoke isn't coming here, I wonder if there's air vents somewhere?

Since it's tedious to just wait, I check other locations.

The second room is like a square.
In the slightly-lower floor-level in the center, a 3 meter great-majin look-a-like monster is there. The AR indicate that it's a Stone Golem. Level is 40. It has [Physical Damage Halved],[Spirit Damage Invalid] unique skills.

"Standard golem is usually taken care by crossing off the E from EMETH so it become just METH, was it?  There's nothing like that written, the letters itself are different anyway~"

Physical damage halved huh... that mean half of it still works right.
I maximize spear skill points and activate it.
I take out a steel spear from the storage.

After getting a good aim, I throw the spear!
The spear strikes the Stone Golem diagonally, passing through it and piercing through the earthen wall until its base.
A moment later, the stone golem crumbles from the place where the spear pierced through, demolished in single blow.

"It's an overkill~"

There's a blue gem in the mouth of the stone golem. This seems to be 『Fruit』.

The third room is a room with a treasure chest in the center.
Traps are laid all over the room up until the treasure chest location, there's only one safe path until there.
Though it's already easy as long as it has one.

I hang a black rapier on my waist, safely go through the traps and get in front of the treasure chest.

"Who~ah, the treasure chest was a mimic!"

Yes, the monster in this room is a dungeon regular, Mimic.
While I equip the rapier, the treasure chest is about to attack by opening its mouth, so I consecutively thrust the rapier. It feels like destroying a furniture rather than a living being.

>[Continuous Attack Skill Acquired]

The Mimic evaporates while leaving out purple smoke. I involuntarily step back and my foot almost got caught up by the trap. Dangerous, dangerous.

Underneath the place where the mimic was, there's a black stone. This one seems to be『Seed』.

When I get back to the first room the fire has been extinguished, thin and white smoke is rising from the cinders.
The Wandering Root has evacuated somewhere, it's nowhere to be seen.

This is fortunate, I collect the statue from the pedestal. This is probably『Tree』.
It doesn't seem that a boulder is going to crash down even if I took the statue.

I leave DeRiddle skill to place the collected item on the right position, then the door silently opens.
So that the door won't close when I'm going back, I stab a suitable great sword on the floor.

From there, there was nothing worth to talk about until the target room, I ran through.

◇

"This is the place where the arm demon should be..."

If he's not revived then I'm going back to indulge on lazing around~

An altar-looking thing is situated on the depth of the room.
I'm closing on it...

The candlesticks around the altar are suddenly lit with blue fire.

"Fuhahahaha! I appear!"

A magic circle with purple light emerges from the altar along with the arm demon's voice.
On the center of the magic cirlce, the arm demon relaxedly rises, no, its whole body has been revived.

"Muhha~~! In perfection I, am revived!"

"As usual, what an idiotic way of talking."

"Mumumumu! You bastard! Silver mask! I, struggle!"

The demon roars, and black aura is rising from its body. It seems to be some kind of support magic. The AR indicates that it's [Physical Damage 90% Cut].

"Unpreparedness is one's greatest enemy! I, do my best!"

The demon roars again. Purple lights are emitting from its nails, horn and tail. The AR indicates that [Physical Attack Power 300% Up].

"Is it fine now?"

I put the sheath of holy sword on my waist while listening the demon. I wonder if it's also called sheath for western swords?

[TLN: Koiguchi 鯉口]

Returning my consciousness which went astray to the demon.

"For showing that allowance, it's my turn now! I, dash forward!"

The demon attacks while dashing!
While leaving purple afterglows, the demon stab the poisonous claw with its right hand, but I duck from the attack and counter with iai flash, slashing from the bottom up.

The blue light track is beautiful like always.
The holy sword tears through the meat smoothly without any resistance, severing the bones.

"Gunununu! I, unyielding!"

The demon who has its arm cut, use the rotating tail to strike instead.
Come to think of it, I was blown away by this tail the first time.
If I don't let my guard down, this isn't a problem. I cut the tail with a single stroke of sword.

"No way! You bastard! You must be a hero! I astonished!"

The demon shows its back after using its tail to attack, I cut it into three pieces from behind...
Yep, I'm alright. After defeating so many insects, I got accustomed to it.

"This can't be! Mao-sama... I, regret..."

After making sure that the demon's HP is 0, I collect the cut tail and arm and put them on the main body. It's troublesome if it resurrects again like before. Let's cremate it.

I set fire by throwing the rest of the molotov bomb to its body from a bit far.
I monitor the corpse until it's burned down from a place away. Probably because its existence is already thin, it has been burned out leaving only ashes in only 5 minutes .

Having finished my business in the labyrinth, I leave it behind.

>Title [Labyrinth Traveler] Acquired

# Intermission: Zena

*

The invoked magic wraps my body.

Even though it's a sensation that I'm familiar with, right now it's irritating.

To confirm the effect I take a step forward.

Okay, it is working properly.

Together with the wind.

I am running.

◇

I met that person yesterday. Even though it has not been even a full day yet since then, I feel like it has been longer than that.
I thought that I could defend the demon's attack with my magic, but my body became battered instead. My feet and arms were throbbing in pain, I was like a doll, unable to move.
I slightly turn my neck.
[TLN: Yes, we have entered her reminiscence]

Fortunately, before I slammed into the ground, I was caught in roadside tree's branches somewhere.

...Fortunately? Is it really so?
My life force is going to disappear first before that overly strong demon

could be defeated and for someone from the army to find me.

Even now, my blood is dripping out little by little.

My consciousness is fading but I come back to myself when I hear someone's footsteps. I muster all of the little energy I have left, and turn my sight.
That someone is wearing a robe so gaudy it's hurting your eyes.
I, who was on the brink of death, still think how out of place it looks in daily life.

I want to go back to (that) daily life too!

Even though I feel exhausted looking at that gaudy robe, I call out for him before he's gone. He has a voice that feels like he's going to be carefree wherever he is.

◇

Running.

Avoiding people, avoiding wagon, I am running.

Ahead, even a step.

Faster, even a moment.

I am running.

◇

I wonder if I blacked out, after calling him out, he immediately stands beside me.

It's a very calm-looking boy which you wouldn't think would wear that gaudy robe.
I wouldn't call him handsome, but he's someone who's giving you a favorable impression.

After ascertaining my wounds and dealing with my fractures, he gently, yes, very gently lifts me up to his arms.

His robe, which looks really new, is dirtied by my blood and dust.
But he doesn't seem to mind those kind of things at all.

Despite his delicate appearance, he has enough power to carry me without looking strained.

I wonder how will he bring me down from the tree?
With magic?

Contrary to my expectation, he flies from the branches without even using magic.

◇

I run through the alley.

Without killing my momentum, I kick the wall to turn at the corner.

I avoid people who are surprised like I'm dancing.

I don't even mind my skirt fluttering around.

I run using every ounce of my strength.

◇

I close my eyes in order to endure the soon-to-come impact.
I hear someone screams annoyingly close to my ears, but it was my own voice.

However the shock never came no matter how long I wait.
When I timidly open my eyes, with worried visage, he tenderly greets me.

He doesn't seem to directly go down below but jumps over a series of branches and go up the roof.
What a nimble person!

Let's call him Nimble-san from now on.

While carrying me, he's ferrying across several roofs, looking for a place to go down.
He was jumping up and down several times, but he was doing it like a weightless feather. As if he has wings.

I wonder if this is what it feels like to be flying in the sky?

◇

I am losing breath.

But I can't stop now.

I was entrusted to call for reinforcement, for the sake of not letting him die.

I am ignoring the scream of my body.

I will let it rest however much later.

Right now I must be faster, even one step.

◇

When we're going through a cramped house, he's being very careful as to not make my fractured limbs touch the furnitures.

I feel like a princess after receiving this much of careful attentions.
A luxurious thing, considering I had readied myself to die just before.

Whenever he avoids the furnitures, our bodies are getting in close contacts.
I've done training with male coworkers before, but he has no beast-like body odors unlike those men. On the contrary, I can faintly smell elegant-like fragrance.
His hair is smooth too. I want to touch that for a bit...

The fight has ended in the plaza. Apparently they won.
I am led by him to receive the medical treatment.

He hands me over to the relief station after the treatment is finished, and goes to rescue other people.
During our parting, he turns around and waves at me once.

I don't know if that was for me, but I feel a bit happy.

◇

It's almost the central main street.

A child suddenly jumps out from the sideway.

I cannot avoid him as it is. I jump over the child, performing a somersault in the air.

I know it's shameless since I'm wearing a skirt, but now it's not the time to be concerned about it.

I leave the child's safety to the adults nearby.

Imposing my feet with unreasonableness for the last time.

◇

On the evening of that day, Lilio and my friends made fun of me when they saw me talking with Nimble-san "Spring finally comes to Zena huh~", they said.
I don't understand love even if you tell me.
Whenever I'm thinking about him, I somehow feel like running in a lap.
If this is really love then I can understand why Lilio, who's a love-maniac, is fast to react.

The next day, I somehow go out with a skirt. There is no particular reason.

Before I go to the temple for treatment, I wonder if I can meet him I go to the bookstore he helped yesterday? I consider that for a bit... This small thought is a secret.

When I really meet him on the bookstore, I feel that this is a fate for a moment.
Am I exaggerating?
Lilio will surely make fun of it, "Children really do like fates eh~", no doubt about it.

He tells me that my unfashionable clothes is "Lovely".
Let's not forget to write the diary when I go home today!

◇

I jump into the central street while rolling.

Running on the street, I'm passing through carriages while grazing them.

I will apologize to the coachman who let out abusive languages later.

Waiting for my breath to catch up is vexing so I recite the wind magic, Whisper Wind.
There should gatekeeper inside the inner wall.

"This is magic soldier Zena speaking! On the east district, purple has appeared on the 13th square near the outer wall."
"Are you using magic? I'm Mondo of the gatekeeper guard unit. Are you certain that it's purple?"

Purple is military term for demon.
We can't exactly shout demon appears in broad daylight.

"There is no mistake, I've confirmed it visually. Please send reinforcements ASAP. I will go back there to help evacuate the civilians."
"W, wait, alone"

Without listening to Mondo-san's last words, I'm going back to the square where Satou-san is.
In the middle of the way, roars and building breaking come from the direction of the square.

My heart tightens, imagining the worst.

It's okay! I persuade my mind.
Nebiren-sama from Garleon temple is there, he is the best holy magic practitioner in this Seryu city. If it's him, even if he can't defeat the higher-demon, he should be able to buy time.

I recast Wind Walk which had its effect expired.

I reaffirm my trembling legs.

To run again.

Going back to that person's side.

◇

I was given a flower as present.
A small winter honey flower which has a gentle fragrance.
I wonder if he knows the meaning in flower language?

We went around the shops Lilio taught me. He is exaggeratively surprised

on even the most ordinary things I show him.
It's kind of fun.

The trump card that I reserved from the the thing Lilio taught me was a misfire, it's a bit shame, but before I know it our hands are joined while we walk together.
The crowds which I always complain in my mind, only for today, I'm grateful to them.

Isn't this what they call a date?

The flower language was "Love which begins to sprout".、If only he knew about it.

◇

I arrive at the square sooner than I expected.

But I don't have time to wonder.

Because, there is only a vacant lot over there...
In despair, I collapse to the ground.

On the center of the lot, an ominous black rock grown with sharp thorn stood. I hear voices from that black rock.
I drag my over abused legs as if it's screaming in protest there.

If I'm not mistaken, the demon said something about [Labyrinth].
I don't understand the connection between demon and labyrinth, but Satou-san and the others might be inside.

I was going to jump inside even by myself.

But, I was stopped at the entrance of the black rock. By the commanders who came by riding horses. They seemed to have been in the inner wall when I contacted it earlier.

I was appointed to be a temporary liaison by the commander, to help in securing the square during the construction of military post.
Since I'm near the commander, I get a hold of various informations. The open space and houses surrounding the square seems to have been sucked into the ground. Alongside with the people.

I'm sure the nimble Satou-san should be able to take refuge in a safe place somewhere. Let's believe that now.

The consul-sama who came after the military post is complete, looks unusually excited while saying something about the Labyrinth Nucleus (Dungeon Core), but I don't really understand.

◇

We got permission to rush into the labyrinth after more than a full day had passed.
Of course I applied for the first group.

I want to run into the labyrinth immediately, but Lilio does not let go of my arms. Though it doesn't mean that I will secede the vanguard position.

First, we secure the first hall that we have entered.
From here, the plan is to advance the main force whenever we finish securing a room. Although it seems too careful, it's an ironclad rule when you're marching into a labyrinth.

We're advancing slowly through the passage even while I'm feeling frustrated.
Footsteps sounds are coming from ahead.

I carefully confirm the other side of the corner using mirror.
You're lying! It's Satou-san!

Not registering this unbelievable good luck, I hesitate for a bit.

I shouldn't have been hesitating.
From the corner of the passage, I see the figure of Satou-san getting attacked by a beast monster that appears from the wall.

I shake off Lilio who was gripping my arms.

As if under the effect of magic, I jump forward like flying.

I make a landing on the wall of the passage's corner.

The beast monster bites Satou-san.

It's okay.

Satou-san avoided it.

My head becomes pure white, but it's not the time for this.

I cast Air Hammer and blast the beast monster away. It doesn't have enough power to defeat it, but let's pull it away from Satou-san first!

Satou-san got caught in the blast, but the beast monster is successfully separated from him.

Before the beast monster start its counter attack, Nebinen-sama has

managed to defeat it. As expected.

I, who is relieved after seeing Satou-san's face, begin to cry and embrace him without wanting to let go.
Lilio-san makes fun of me like it's other people's problem later.

Even though he has just escaped from such dangerous place like a labyrinth, Satou-san is like the usual Satou-san.

But it may be so that I don't worry too much.
Since I will be off duty tomorrow, I should make something delicious for him tomorrow morning.

Lilio will most likely make fun of me again.

That kind of ordinary life might be good once in a while.

Web Novel Volume 4

# 4-1. Misunderstanding is a Spice for Love Comedy

*

Satou's here. There's this thing called the butterfly dream, and I, who think that's it's better for it to be a dream, Satou.

[TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhuangzi_%28book%29#.22The_Butterfly_Dream.22]

Could I ever go back to the nostalgic world someday?

◇

From the window, I can hear the traffic's noise outside. Did I oversleep?

I was able to obtain various knowledges yesterday, I also now understand Arisa's true color.
After the morning come, I've cooled off compared to the time when I knew that she bought herself with magic, and also, she has found out my true identity, so it would be dangerous to let her go.
I convince myself that she's a clue to go back to my original world.
Strangling the neck of a little girl just to be certain, that kind of thing is impossible for me. I'd rather run away to the end of the world.

While contemplating to lose myself to the warmth of the bed and go to sleep once again, the door opens with a bang.
There was no knock.

"Satou-san, are you awake~?  Your lover has come~"

Martha-chan sure is energetic this early. Behind her, "I, I'm not his lov...", is Zena-san who is trying to block Martha-chan's mouth while wa-wa-

ing.

"Good morning."

While I might be a half-awake. I raise my upper half to greet them.
It's cold. I took off my robe after I had finished the business and went to sleep just like that, but... I see, the shirt I wore under the robe was peeled off by Arisa.

"Oh, that's quite a good body~."

Martha-chan gazes at the half-naked me interestingly. Zena-san is also looking from behind while blushing.
I thought she's accustomed with nude men as a soldier.

"I'm sorry, for making you see such unsightly figure. I'll go change my clothes immediately."

I place my hand on the bed while trying to get up. "Ahn♪" ...It's lukewarm.
When I look below, a half-naked little girl is there. My hand is attached to her naked chest... When did she crawl in?
Seeing me sleeping together with a little girl, Zena-san's face changes from red to blue.

"...Master ...If you do that much ...I'll break."

From over there, as if waiting for this timing, Lulu is sleep-talking.
Looking over there, probably because she tossed around in bed, she's sleeping sideway with her back facing here. Since her clothes is short, her cute ass is facing here... I realize that she doesn't wear an underwear.
Furthermore the sheet is stained red... Huh? I didn't attack her okay?

"Fi, fi, filthy~~~~! Satou-san is an idiot~~~~!"

Zena-san runs out of the room while crying.
Martha-chan scratches her head, "Sorry for disturbing~ Please take your time~", and she closes the door.

This is the first time I've heard filthy in real life. It feels like someone's problem.

"Master, if you have a clean cloth, could you give it to me? Lulu seems to have a period."

I take out a piece of cloth from the bag.

"Thank you. Leaving that aside, do you not chase her? If you don't go soon, you won't be able to fix the misunderstanding you know~"

It's not like she's my girlfriend, but I'd hate it if a friend keep the unpleasant misunderstanding that I'm a lolicon.

Looking at the radar, she's at the main street just outside of this inn. As expected of a soldier, she's fast. As she is, she'll pass this room after a bit. ...This skill is convenient, but it's scary if a stalker obtains it.

While thinking stupid thing, I'm wearing the shirt on the floor, since I can't afford to jump out half-naked. It goes without saying that I have had my trousers since the beginning.

Measuring the timing, I jump out from the window to the street.
I land to block Zena-san's route. I catch the surprised Zena-san, and disperse her momentum by rotating once.

"Zena-san, it's a misunderstanding."

"But, you're sleeping with such a cute girl!"
"She just got on the wrong bed when she was half-asleep."

It's safe to sleep together since she's a child right?
I have been properly wearing trousers since yesterday. I want to strongly emphasize for my innocence.

I'm not a lolicon!

"There's also another girl with black hair! E, eu..."
"Do you mean the older sister with a bad sleeping posture, it seems to be her period."

Zena-san finally weaken.

"B, but, a man who buy slaves usually makes them attend in the night too, that is according to Lilio!"

Damn you, co-worker Lilio.

"That depend on the person. Those sisters are substitutes for maids you know? The beastkin girls are to act as guards, but they're not suitable for shopping."

"...But"

Even if she understands, her emotion still hasn't catch up huh?
If I say "If I intend to do that then I'd have bought a sexy woman." here, she'd likely be even more angry.

"Today you're wearing something different from the one piece yesterday. There are a lot of neatly arranged frills, it's gorgeous. It's drawing out

Zena-san's charm."

At time like this, it's better to praise and leave her in haze.
Saying, "Such thing... It's just the clothes...", Zena-san shyly says while looking a bit happy.

"It's lovely, but aren't you cold wearing light clothes?"
"No, Since I've trained myself, it's alright."

That's not a line from a woman, Zena-san.
Here I should have take her under a man's arm and say "You'll be warm here"!

"That's right, a shop just ahead is selling beautiful stoles. Why don't we see it together?"
"Is that true? I'll go!"

Yosh, I've successfully steered the conversation off the course.
Then, after comparing several dozens of stoles and shawl, and I give her the pink stole she chooses herself as a present, her mood has completely back to normal.
Woman's shopping sure is long eh?

◇

When we got back to the inn, Arisa is calling me from somewhere slightly apart from the stable.

"Welcome back, master. I'm glad that the misunderstanding seems to have been resolved."

The main culprit is saying it like it's not her problem, gets a poke on her

forehead.

"I'm home, what are you doing on a place like this?"
"We're asking Liza-san to share her breads since we were hungry."
"So you've finished eating?"
"Yup, Lulu is still eating inside. She seems to lack appetite..."

I see, for a slow person, smoked meat is probably painful. I hand Arisa several pieces of copper coins and tell her to buy some fruits.

I go back to my room for a change of clothes.
Zena-san is waiting at the inn bar in the first floor while drinking fruit juice.

Back in the room, I pour water to the copper basin on the table from the Hell Water Jug, and use it to wash my face. Since there doesn't seem to be any bed hair, I wet my hand for a bit and use it to comb my hair. Let's look for hairdresser in this world next time.

I change into a clean robe, and put on a new boots. When I'm tying my boots, I found a dried-up fruit.
Did Arisa throw this? Although, Martha-chan will clean it even if I leave it alone, I put it inside the storage since there's something that I have something in mind.
That remind me, I try to take out the『Piping Hot Meal』I put inside it during the first day I came here. It remains piping hot. I bite it after confirming that it's not rotten with appraisal. The taste also remain as it was.
『Piping Hot Meal』and『Dried-up Fruit』. Since it's interesting, let's test something out.
I allocate 1 skill point to Item Box skill and activate it. I store the remaining『Piping Hot Meal』inside it.
Since I likely will forget about it again, I put a note on the Notebook inside the Exchange tab.

◇

"Thank you for waiting, Zena-san."
"Don't worry, I was just having a chat with Martha-chan."

"This nuisance will disappear~.", and so Martha-chan goes back to work.

In her place, Arisa, Liza and the others are coming back, I call them.

Lulu doesn't look too well so she return to the room. I ask for a passing-by maid to bring water to the room, and give her few copper coins for tips.

I go outside with Zena-san, bringing Arisa, Liza and the others.
Putting 10 silver coins in a small bag, I give it to Arisa to buy their change of clothes and other daily necessities.
Liza and the others will act as guards and luggage carriers.

"Master, is it okay to use the extra changes money for sweets?"
"As long as it's only as far as 1 big copper coin, it's okay. Since that include for lunch, don't use it all for snacks."

"Yee~s", Arisa departs to the east street while saying so. Pochi and Tama are going along on both her sides, she looks like a children gang boss.
Liza who follows from behind is looking like a parent.

"She's a very affable slave isn't she?"
"I don't know if that attitude is fit for a slave, but that girl is an easy-going person."

I don't know how a slave should appropriately act, but if she keeps being that exaggerated to her surrounding, I'm confident that she'd become a

failure of a human being later.

◇

Since the weather is quite nice, we decided to take a walk together to a park nearby while chatting.

"Are you off-duty today?"
"No, I will have a duty this afternoon."
"Didn't you also have a night duty just yesterday?"
"That's right, we don't have enough personnels so a half-day holiday is all I could get."

Hmm?  You came to meet me despite being that busy?  I can't imagine that she has fallen that hard, does she have other business?

"No, it's nothing really important... It was the first experience of real battle for some people in the army, so to calm their heart..."

I see, come to think of it, even if it was something that wouldn't endanger my life, I was curiously calm.

Although there's some lingering memories from the battle yesterday...

No, even while fighting and after the fight with the demon, I was fine, Was it because it didn't feel real?

And even though I have slaughtered an entire community of race similar to Liza, I don't feel even the slightest guilt, why is that?

I wonder if it's an effect of an unknown Special Abilty?

Questions are whirling around in my mind...

And it's going in circle.

A fluffy fragrance tickles my nose. When I raise my eyes, there's a face of worried Zena-san.

"Are you alright? Satou-san."
"I'm sorry, my thought just wandered off for a bit. I'm alright."

Even if I think this alone, the answer won't come, guess I'll consult with Arisa tonight...

Then, I ask Zena-san to help me practice spell chanting in the park, but since I couldn't concentrate, it's not working. Even still, I continue the chanting practice as if running away from something. Zena-san patiently guides the me who was like that. It lasts until Zena-san's off-duty time is over in the afternoon...

# 4-2. Little Girls Shopping

*

"Okay~ Here we go~. Everyone, follow me~."

In accordance with Arisa's command, Pochi and Tama follow along. Arisa talks as if she's not a slave but a master. I can't possibly do it, but I'm not thinking of doing it either.
Even if master allow it, as a slave I shouldn't intervene...

"First of all, it's underwear! So what kind of underwear you girls are wearing?"

While saying so, Arisa roll up Pochi's mantle and skirt to confirm. Even if she's from different race and a girl, I think she should be more discreet, but I wonder if it's fine since she's still a kid?

"You're lying~ You're not wearing one! Don't tell me, you too Liza-san?"
"Yes, I'm not wearing an underwear."

Arisa says, "I can't believe this~", exaggeratedly with both her hands inter-lapping on her open mouth. It's some kind of expression, but since we are from different races, we don't really understand it.

"We will buy underwears for everyone~ Now, let's go!"
"Oou~."
"Oou~, nano desu~."

Seemingly forgetting something, Arisa lead Tama and Pochi by hands while walking together. Since the 3 of them are children, they could become preys for pickpocket or crime, so I follow along closely.

"Still, this country's underwear is knicker too. I guess I have to make it myself If I want cute shorts or bra~"

She seems to be dissatisfied with the selections of the shop. I don't understand the lingo, but maybe it's a type of underwear?

"It's better than having no panties I guess, Liza-san, I'm sorry for a bit."

After saying so, Arisa hugs my waist. Apparently she's measuring the size.

"Uncle, please give me 9 of this size, and 3 for this and that. How much is it?"

She confidently tries to bargain the 10 big copper coins price the shokeeper named, and she drives it down to 6 big copper coins. Furthermore she also gets 5 decoration strings as bonus. Does she have negotiation and haggling skill?
No wonder she was entrusted for shopping by master.

The 15 pieces of underwears are put into a bag. Physical labor is my role.

◇

"Kuh~ I'm losing to the sweet smells~."
"Smells good~."
"Nano desu~."

I stop the three people who are unsteadily going toward the stall with sweet smell and we go back to shopping. While she seems reliable, she is still a child after all.

"Wonder what's available for the clothings~? The materials are from linen or cotton huh~ Uwa, there are clothes from knitted grass too!

Everyone, what kind of clothes do you like?"

Pochi and Tama are at loss. These girls have never choose their clothes before. I have custom ordered a clothes only once when I was still with my tribe, but beside that I normally got used clothes from other people. She probably comes from a wealthy family.

"I don't mind what kind, as long as it's wearable. Since I'm fighting with spear, a sturdy clothes would be good."

"I see, let's look for a clothes for warrior that looks cute!  I'm burning!"
"Burning~"
"Nano desu~"

I think it doesn't need to be cute, but not only Arisa, Poch and Tama look happy too. They're probably swept apart by the atmosphere.

"This, how about this one piece? The chartreuse green color is quite pretty, and this cuff's decoration is cute too~ Furthermore the back is open, so when you brush your hair up, you can seduce a man with one blow~."
"Arisa, I'm happy that you're looking clothes for me, but I'm picking this tunic and pants. It looks easy to fight with and the fabric is thick so it'll last long."

She seems to dislike my choice, Arisa scratch her head which is covered with mantle. Putting us demi-human aside, why is a human like her hide her head with mantle? It's mysterious.

In the end, besides Arisa, everyone bought two sets of tunics and trousers, and a one piece recommended by Arisa.

"Arisa, we're satisfied with just one set of clothes. I don't want to waste master's money..."

"It's not a waste! If we dress too poorly, we're disgracing master!  There's no need for flashy clothes, but we do need the the change of clothes!"

Arisa firmly declares. A girl from the same race of master insisting to this far. It surely is necessary then.

We bought from 4 stalls, and as one would expect, 15 pieces of clothes are bulky.
Since it wasn't going to fit on the bag, we bought rucksacks for each person to hold their own shares. Of course I'm carrying the shares of Lulu, who's sleeping in the inn.

We spent 4 silver coins and 2 big copper coins so far. Is it alright for slaves to spend this much money?

◇

"Next, it's shoes~."
"Shoes~?"
"We have shoes no desu."

Tama tilted her head, Pochi pointed at her own sandals-wearing feet.
It's not limited for slaves like us, even normal poor citizens don't wear shoes.

"Don't you think spare shoes is a bit too luxurious?"

We're spending large amount money like it's normal. I'm afraid that it's too extravagance. I don't mind if I'm punished, but when I think that master would be disgusted of me, my heart freezes.

"If you use your body to fight, then sandals is dangerous you know? Boots

or at least shoes from thick leather is better."

"Our skins are sturdy, so it will be fine."

Arisa shocks her head.

"Biting insect, and among them some have poison, creatures like that exist. If your soles got injured, even if you're a hero, you could still die! Therefore, we should buy shoes."

She is push-fully going to the store, but the shopkeepers refuses.
Arisa tries to force through, but the shopkeeper doesn't seem that he's going to compromise.

"Why can't we!"
"Who want to touch demi-human foot! These guys are just right barefooted. You're obstructing my business, go away!"

Since he's going to thrust away Arisa, I lift her from behind. The shopkeeper's fist hit my stomach, but the power is too weak, it doesn't hurt at all.

After spending time in labyrinth together with master, it seems that I've become strong.

If allowed, I would like to fight in the labyrinth with master again. That frog's grilled meat was delicious ...No, this isn't for the sake of grilled meat at all. I was happy to be helpful in the labyrinth.

◇

"Now then~ I've pulled myself together, next is general goods!"

"Goods~."
"Goods nano desu~."

I wonder if Pochi and Tama understand what general goods are...

"Arisa, what kind of things are we buying? If it's tablewares or cookwares then we have it to some extent."
"Is that so~ then, let's omit things that I have and unlikely to be needed."

Arisa is citing the goods as if singing.

"I wonder what's available~ comb, hand-mirror, cup, flask, sewing needles, threads, cloth scissor, towel, pen and ink, and paper, I guess."

"Arisa, isn't hand mirror too expensive? Beside, what do you want the sewing kit and writing tools for?"

"Writing tools are a request from master. The sewing kit is going to be used by me. Since I was a self-sufficient cosplayer back then, even without skills, I could use sewing kit~ I could even make cute underwear and period-related clothing~."

We've finished gathering general goods from various shops, but we didn't buy hand-mirror in the end. Hand-mirror was exactly 3 silver coins. Even after Arisa tried to haggle it, it's still over our budget.

She readily gives up on buying the scissor and needle, but she only gives up on the hand mirror after terribly hesitating about it.

◇

"Alright, mission complete~ Next is the long-awaited snacks~"

"Snacks~  Meat~."
"Meat~ Nano desu~."
"Even though we've just had breakfast in the morning, we're having another meal?"

I thought meals are only for morning and evening, is it different for her?
Certainly we had many meals in the labyrinth, but that was special occasions to recover our strength that had been sapped by continuous fights.

"Sweets are needed for cultural life!"

Master has allowed it, let's not oppose it too much.
Even while we're choosing foods from the stalls, she didn't forget to pick fruits for Lulu. Since Lulu seems to be her big sister, she's a good little sister who thinks of her sibling.

"Everyone, what do you want to eat?"
"Meat~!"
"Meat!"
"Meat is nice."

Arisa becomes to look a bit disappointed.
I think there is nothing more delicious than meat, is it different for human race?

"What kind of meat?"
"The one with skewer~"
"Meat stick on bones nano desu~"
"I'd like roasted bird's leg meat."

After listening to our opinions, Arisa declares.

"Alright, since the budget is aplenty, let's go in turn~."

After that, it's the time of bliss. With moderate salt and oil, brimming with good smells, the grilled mountain mutton meats, I don't understand which kind is it, but it's meat attached to bone having chewing texture out of this world, it taste a bit like grilled chicken meat. Meat is wonderful after all.

Lastly, I tried eating the sweet paste recommended by Arisa, but it's inferior to meat. Human race sense of taste is different after all?

Even before I became a slave, I could only eat meat during a festival and it was fish meat. When I think about it, I'm lucky to be master's slave.

# 4-3. Miscellaneous Matters and Flags

*

Satou's here. Do you feel like you're dancing at someone's palm?

I feel like Son Goku from Saiyuki...

◇

"What's the matter? Master, your back is slouching you know~?"

My thought which has been going in circle stopped, Arisa is standing carrying large luggages.

"Your tummy hurt~?"
"Hurt no desu?"

I turn my line of sight to the direction where my robe is pulled, there Pochi and Tama are looking worryingly while crouching near my feet. Liza calmly stands, but her worries are transmitted here.

"I'm okay, I was just tired after being so busy for the past two days."

I pat Pochi's and Tama's heads.
I'm really disqualified as an adult for worrying these girls. Just by thinking so, the guilt and fear that had been weighting on my mind just before disappear like fallen tides.

...I check the Log just in case any message pops up but there's none.

I really should talk with Arisa tonight. I whispered to Arisa, "Tonight, after Lulu is sleeping, spare some of your time", but, "Eh~ aren't you

falling too fast?", an answers full of misunderstanding comes out. I will take that as an OK for now.

When I ask for the result of the shopping, Pochi and Tama happily begin to take out clothes from the bag, I stop them. It has been decided to check them after we get back to the inn.
Liza apologizes for spending too much, but I tell her that it's necessary expenses, so don't think about it.

Even with current pace of spending money, counting only the Shiga Kingdom's currency I have, it'll take 2-3 years before it's dried up, so there's nothing to worry.

On the way back to the inn, I'm listening to Arisa and the girls' experience in shopping. Pochi and Tama talk about their first time shopping in glee from beginning to the end, they're telling me how fun it was.
I suggested Liza to let me carry half of the luggages and Lulu's clothes, but she gently refused.

◇

Just before the inn, I'm seeing a familiar back. She's walking a bit unsteady.
Martha-chan and the helper girl from the inn are carrying a bunch of firewoods.

"Martha-chan, are you returning from errands?"
"Ah, Satou-san. Is the date over already?"
"Unfortunately, Zena-san had works in the afternoon."

While we're talking, I take some of the firewoods from Marth-chan and the girl. It may be their errands but our destination is the same. It's fine

to take it by half.
Liza tries to take it, but I refuse because both her hands are occupied.
Pochi and Tama are saying "Give here~" too, but there is no point taking it from little girls just to give it to another little girls, so they give up.

It's not really heavy, although it's at least 2-3 kilos. It's unreasonable for two young girls to carry two bundles of this each. They usually have it delivered but, it seems that today the amount is not enough for training so they went to purchase it.

We enter the courtyard from the back door near the stable. I put the firewood bundles on its place.

>[Carriage Skill Acquired]

"Thank you~ Satou-san. Thanks to you, we're saved~"
"Thank you very much, guest-san."
"Don't worry about it."

Martha-chan goes to the kitchen with one bundle of firewood. The helper girl, her name is Yuni. I decided to observe Yuni who's going to take care horses of other guest.
I know that there are horses from yesterday, but I've never seen how horses are taken care, so I'm interested. This is not at all an escape.

Yuni is standing on top of a stool, and doing her best to make her small body reach the horses to brush them. I offered to help, but she said that she would get scolded by the innlady if she let a guest helps her.
After hiding their luggages on the space below the straws, Pochi and Tama come back. Pochi and Tama start helping Yuni. Liza tells me that they've helped in the night and morning too. Is it okay to get the help if it's Pochi and the girls?

Seeing the three little girls doing their best to care for the horse, I feel like

a parent who came to an athletic meet to cheer for his children, I'm healed.
The little girls become 4 before I knew it, but Arisa doesn't look like she's motivated.
"Since the clothes which I've just bought will be dirty~" so she says while showing town-girl-like clothes under her mantle.

"Liza, I'm going to the temporary military post to get the spear and magic core money, do you want to come along?"
"Yes, I will accompany master."
"Me too! I'm going too!"

Pochi and Tama stop helping and run here.
"You going somewhere~?", "You go nodesu?", saying as they're coming, but since we would likely become an annoyance if we all go, I tell them to continue helping.
"Ay!","Nano desu~", and so they go back to work while carrying the horse's fodders. I wonder why they look mysteriously happy?

◇

"How is Lulu's condition?"
"She seems to be alright. I've given her change of clothes and underwear, so if you go now you could get to see lucky lewd scenes you know~?"

I knock on Arisa's head for saying stupid things. Are you really half sister of that girl?

"Let's stop for a bit~."

I declared that and go to the Worker Guild.

"Hello Nadi-san."
"Ara, welcome Satou-san. You're together with a cute girl today."

As we entered, Nadi-san greeted courteously from the other side of the counter. There's also an old man, which seems to be the shopkeeper, but he always sleep whenever I come. Does he even work?

I talk to Nadi-san for a request to deliver mementos of the deceased. Rather than a suspicious guy like me, this town's person like Nadi-san would be better to deliver them. By the way, I tried asking the officials at the temporary military post but I was flat out rejected. Because I conveyed the deceased name and rough figures, she should be able to contact the bereaved families.

"Do you also want me to collect the remuneration on your behalf?"
"Come again? What remuneration?"

After conveying the information about the deceased to Nadi-san who willingly undertake the delivery, I hear some strange things.
It seems that she wanted to know if she's also to act as an agent for receiving the rewards for delivering mementos. I'm just being a busybody so I don't really need rewards...

"Then how about only receive the reward if the family is rich? People like those will get suspicious you're aiming for something if you deliver the mementos without asking rewards."

So it become like that. It was decided to give the worker guild the maximum limit of the fee.

"Nadi-san, I have another matter to ask..."

Since I intend to buy or rent a house, I ask for the market price. In the end, I didn't ask for the intermediation though, and it's not because I can't

afford it.
Nadi-san says, "There are a lot of people who dislike living in neighborhood with demi-human, of course this applies in the inner wall, but even in the west district, I don't think anyone would sell you a house. You could find it in the east street if you look for it, but since the public order is bad, if a prosperous person like Satou-san comes to live in, then thieves would attack you on the next day without a doubt.", so I was informed.

◇

"Please sign this transaction document. The expense for appraising the spear has been deducted from the paid amount. The spear's safety has been verified so you can bring it to the town, but please take care as not to give demi-human the weapon."

I sign the document presented by the official, and receive the spear back. I wrap the spear with cloth I brought.

The price of the magic cores is 17 silver coins. The appraisal fee is 2 silver coins, I wonder if that's a proper amount?  Honestly, I think you can live just being an appraiser.
Just by going to the labyrinth with 4 of us in a day, we earned 6 Arisa... Wait, that unit is funny. It wouldn't be able to afford skill holder or knowledgeable slaves but if it's for labor slaves then it's plentiful.
If I distribute it for 4 then with our current living expense, it's enough for half a month...

"Eh~ Labyrinth is quite profitable~."
"You're risking your life though."

Arisa who was quiet inside the temporary military post began to

cheerfully talk as soon as we got out. Her eyes is literally shining.

"Hey, Master, can you listen to me? Do you want to settle down in this town?"
"No, I don't have such intention."

Since we'll be obstructing people on the entrance, we're talking while continue walking.

"But, but, weren't you going to buy a house just a while ago?"
"I don't want to keep Liza and the girls stay in the barn so I was thinking of buying one but it seems to be impossible~"

Liza was going to say something but lost the moment to Arisa's vigor.

"The lover-san earlier is your local wife?"
"Don't say that unpleasant words Though I do want to get closer, she's not my lover. We've met only 3 days ago you know?"
[TLN:He's talking about local wife part].

"Then~ I want to go to labyrinth city!"

Arisa declares while raising her hands and posturing with her entire body that it almost feel like she's letting out SFX.
Labyrinth again.

"Labyrinth city that mean there's a labyrinth there isn't it? Don't you feel repulsed to it?"
"Uuun, certainly unpleasant memories feel like they're going to resurface but more importantly! I want to raise my level!"

This isn't a game.
No, precisely because this is not a game that she'd want to level up.

"What do you want to do after you level up?"

"It's going to be demon lord season soon, so I want to level up in order to survive! While I'm at it, I want to raise magic skill that could be used to solve the Geass too."

Demon lord season, they're not cabbages and eggplants you know...
Since it was such a ridiculous phrase, I carelessly pay no attention to it.

# 4-4. Flea Market

*

Satou's here. Doing trial and error is the most fun time I ever have. Although it's depressing when there are too many errors...

◇

"You could die before you could raise your level."
"It's alright, I have plenty of safety margins prepared."

I ignore Arisa who keeps talking in high spirit, and ask for Liza's thought.

"Liza, do you want to go to the labyrinth city too?"
"I will go to wherever master go to."
"I'm grateful for your deep loyalty, but I'd like to hear Liza's opinion. Since I will still be the one who make the final decision, please tell me your honest feeling without refraining."

Listen to subordinate's opinion and implement them as it is ⇒ If it fail, blame the subordinate, I won't be like that. I've decided not to be like that when I was in subordinate's position on my work. Don't impose absurd assignments!

"I would like to go to the labyrinth city if permitted."

"Hey~ I'm having a good speech here, listen~"
"I'll listen to you later."
"Che~, you're treating me differently than Liza-san~"

I ignore Arisa who becomes a bit sulky.
If we go to the labyrinth city, the advantages are as follow, Liza and the

girls could go around freely, the discrimination would be minimized (it probably won't disappear), and Arisa and the girls could raise their levels. The disadvantages are... None? Nono, I'll be parting with people I'm acquainted in this town, like Zena-san and Nadi-san. She worried about me so much, while here I'm thinking such cold-hearted thing.

"Well, I have no intention of settling down in the labyrinth city, but it could be nice to go on a tour there."
"Tour... This isn't like our original world."

Isn't it fine? Different world tour.

"Rather than that, where is this labyrinth city located?"
"I don't know?"

Oy, princess.

"Wait, don't look at me with those eyes. I do know that it is on Shiga Kingdom, but I don't know the exact location."

Should I buy some simple map from the bookstore? My map only display the wilderness from back then and Seryuu city, so it's unusable for this case. I'm not entirely sure of this but it probably could display the whole area only if I've been there first.

"Master you don't have horses or a carriage right?"
"Nope."
"I wonder where they're selling it?"

Since the square near the gate has an area full of big stables, I'll ask there. Usually I would ask Nadi-san, but I've just tasked her with a request earlier, so she's probably not available now.

"Since you can afford a house then you must be able to afford horse and

carriage, but for the sake better journey, let's look for hidden treasures for traveling expenses!"

Arisa points at a flea market. This girl sure has an iron heart. Even after she was thoroughly ignored, she's not discouraged.

The flea market is open on the place where the slave auction was held yesterday, on the widest square of the east district.
The slave traders' carriages and tents remain as they were, but the stalls that were selling sake and foods in the midnight are gone, in their places, dozens of merchant open their business showing various junks lined up on a space about as small as a desk. There might be more than 100 of them.

"Master, I have a request before we charge ahead."
"I'll listen for once, what is it?"
"I want permission to use two magics. They're <<Sense Magic Wave>> and <<Sense Evil>>."

After she explained the effect of those magics, I give her permission. The former is a magic to "Somehow" able to discern magic tools and the latter is to recognize someone who is approaching with malicious intent.
Since there doesn't seem to be any particular harm, I allow her. Of course I could do it myself even if I don't let her, but I'm not the kind of a person who like to prohibit anything and everything.

"This! This is surely a find!"

The tool that Arisa proudly proclaim is a magic tool for sure, a broken one according to appraisal. The name of tool is [The Invitation of the Dream Flies in the Moonlight Night], that questionable name come up, and the appraisal result is [▲▲▲ but ●●● in order to □□ did ●▲ playing ● namagu]. As usual, description of this world's magic tools feels like harassments. The shape itself looks like a musical instrument or a music

box, but the decorations are obscene so it's probably a lewd tool.

"It looks like it's broken, so no."

I go out of the stall while the shopkeeper promote the tool as a work of art, and we look around other stalls. It's fun to go around stalls in this kind of flea market.

Because I see the same short wand I bought back then for less than half the price, I bought two of them. After I bought it, I realized that it was a waste of money... but it could eventually be useful for something.

Other things are ornamental strings to tie Pochi's and Tama's short sword sheath to their belts, I also buy tassel decoration for Liza spear. Each of them only cost several copper coins.
In typical RPG, leather products are usually expensive, strangely, from what I've heard from the nii-chan shopkeeper, in this season they kill a lot of goats who don't hibernate, so they stock up a lot of leather products making it cheaper.

Because prices are considerably cheaper on flea market, it's harder to shop than on normal stalls.

I didn't forget to buy a ribbon as a souvenir for Lulu. It's a pink colored ribbon about 50cm long. The color is lighter than the stole Zena-san bought this morning. I wonder if the dye come from this neighborhood?

A lot of suspicious medicines are being displayed, but according to appraisal skill, they are just fake energy drinks with no effect. I'm interested with the energy drink part, but since the skill doesn't tell me the ingredients, I refrain.

They're also selling soap and pomade among other hair products. I'm not buying the pomade because the smell is too strong, but even though the

soap is an expensive item for this market and as much as one big copper coin, I buy it without hesitation since it has nostalgic scents of milk soaps. I only want to buy one but Arisa desperately pleas, "This is good stuff!", I ended up buying all seven of the stocks.

"Master~ this! Buy this~."

The thing that Arisa offered are... glasses. Since these don't have lens, it's just a frame.

"What do you want this for? This kind of thing."
"Of course it's for master to use! There aren't enough glasses boys in this fantasy world!  This is the first step to bring the fetish to this world~~~~."

I give a chop to Arisa who started to scream incomprehensible things to silent her. The shopkeeper says that it's one silver coin, but I don't buy it of course.

◇

The neighbor stall has cards-like... Isn't that Karuta. From appraisal, it's an item passed down from the ancestor of Seryuu city's earl from ancient Yamato era. It's not a magic tool but it seems to be under effect of fixture magic. The market price is 10 gold coin.

"Onii-san, you have discerning eyes~ This is a toy from the ancient empire."

Arisa interrupts, "Eh~ How do you play it?", while looking playful.

Ignoring the shopkeeper who start spouting some random things, I'm fascinated with the pile of papers in front of me. There are five 30cm

thick stacks of book and papers tied with string, among them one is worth 100 gold coins. It's abnormal compared to the other bundles which are only valued for about one big copper coin each.

"How much is that toy?"
"It's 3 gold coins, but for the cute young lady here, I'll give you 7 silver coins, how about it?"

I pretend to be interested with Karuta and listen to him. Its asking price is about 1/7 of the market price. I could get some profit if I resale it, but it's bothersome to look for the customers.
Arisa loses interest after hearing the price. She seemed to have wanted it because it's nostalgic, but it seems that she didn't really want it to that much.

"It's a bit expensive. How about these bundles of papers, are they some kind of reading material?"
"They don't have any value, but since they're made of papers, burning it would be wasteful, so I'm selling them in bundles."

I casually enter into the topic with the shopkeeper.
It seems that it was disused things from when he was sorting things for a certain wealthy person. He wanted to sift through usable books to be sold later, but found out that most of them are just paper useful only for scribbling.

"How much is it? It looks like most papers are writable on both sides, so it should be able to be used for the children's writing practice."
"Right then, I'll give you one bundle for 3 copper coins. If you buy them all then I'll make it 2 big copper coins."

I decided to buy them all. I'll have the unnecessary papers for Lulu and the girls to learn letters.
I put the papers to the pouch from the bag and give it to Liza. I was going

to carry half, but Liza refused.

"Customer, if you want to teach letters, how about you use this item here?"

He shows me cards with Shiga kingdom's vocabularies, while the back sides are drawn with the picture of the corresponding letters. The picture is monochrome but since the lines are highlighted, you can understand how to write it. On the [Water] card, I don't know what's drawn on it, but there are only a few like that.
1 set consist of 100 pieces. They're written with ink pen one by one. It must have been made with enormous effort, but the market price shows that it's only 1 silver coin.

"Those are some interesting cards."
"This is something that I thought myself, I was thinking of using it to teach the children in my hometown."

From what he said, it was originally made from wood wastes and ink. He thought that it would sell well so he earnestly asked a painter acquaintance to make one set, and he promoted it heavily to the chamber of commerce but the production cost and the selling price were too lop-sided. It seems that the production cost 4 silver coins while chamber only want to pay 1 silver coin for it.

"So this was all drawn one by one?"
"Yes, of course it was..."

Won't the cost become cheaper if you use printing?
Arisa stops me. She puts her forefinger on her mouth.

"What?"
"Weren't you trying to suggest printing?"
"Yeah. ...Anything wrong with it?"

"When I was in the castle, I've never seen printing. It's dangerous to carelessly introduce technology you know?"
"Even though there's casting, they don't know printing?"
"Technology seems to be something like that."

Arisa who had failed once insists, I'll stop suggesting the printing.
I apologize to the shopkeeper for having private talk during the negotiation.

"I'm sorry, it was a difficult story to tell."
"I'm sorry too, even though there are only few people who are interested with this..."
"I want to buy 1 set, how much is it?"

So the interest was low? Even though that it could be popular.
He cites 4 silver coins. That's the production cost.

"Is it fine? Then won't you not profit from this?"
"It's fine. If I can give this product to a person who understand its worth."

I'm a bit moved with his melancholy.
It's a good idea, it would be a shame if it just fade away.

"Why don't you think the way to produce them next time?  Since there should be demands, you could think about the price afterward. You could look for cheap material, or a way to mass produce them cheaply, it's fun to do various trials and errors."

I thought that he would think that it's just some needless words of the customer during the payment, but maybe because he found a fellow who understand him as an inventor, his eyes start to regain its strength, after confirming that, I go toward other stalls.

# 4-5. Flea Market (2)

*

Satou's here. Man who tries to scam with get-rich-quick scheme has the same atmosphere even in different world, I wonder why?

In the first place, in this world, having scam skill is enough to get you arrested...

◇

The Radar which has only been displaying white dots until now, suddenly shows a lone red dot.
It's near.

The man pretends to stagger while plunging straight at me. His hands are holding a box wrapped in velvet cloth. A scammer, or should I say a fraudulent extortionist.

He's coming with a speed and distance that normally would be unavoidable, but I avoid it naturally.
From the surrounding's viewpoint, it probably looks like a man suddenly falls down on his own. The fact that, it is, but...

"Aaah! My heirloom's pot!"

He cried out loud, we cannot not get involved now.
After I avoided the man, I confirmed that Liza and Arisa had completely ignored the man and kept walking, properly following me. Seems that Arisa had also noticed it with her Sense Evil.

"Hey, you! Don't run away!"

The man holds the broken pot with one hand, and grabs me with the other.
Matching the timing with when he grabbed me, I made him faint. The people around should see it as if he fainted because he was too exasperated.
If I only have the Fighting skill then I wouldn't have been able to do it this smoothly, thanks to Abduction skill, I did it without being noticed.

I put the fainted man to the back alley carefully. Before we leave him, I check his status because he might have friends, but he doesn't belong to any criminal guild.
He will probably loses all his belongings before he wakes up, but at least he probably won't die.

"The security here really is bad~"
"Yeah, when I first went into the east district, the content of my purse was quickly got stolen."

Come to think of it, even though this is a district with bad security problem, there sure are a lot of shops with expensive commodities. Is the crime prevention all right?
I begin to worry about other people's problems.

When I observe more carefully, there are several people with good physiques, who clearly aren't merchants, strutting along the area.
Checking on AR, they are called East District Vigilante Corp, one of the watchdog guilds. It seems that several groups are guarding the area together.

◇

Right now we are in the area of the flea market focused on pottery. I buy a bottle with lid to put medicine and ointment. The bottle is not made of glass but bisque. This is the same thing as the one from the alchemy introductory set, but won't the medicine have chemical reaction?

That remind me, I've bought an alchemy set yet I've never read the book even once.

A crowd is formed a bit in front of us.
"I wonder what~" Arisa says while briskly goes into the crowd, she comes back after a while with a bored face.

"What was it?"
"Since they said that it's a magic tool, I expected something good... but it's just a spinning top which moves after you pour it magic power.
Furthermore it's 1 gold coin much, those people are also crowding just because they're curious."

What did you say?

"How did he pour the magic power?"
"There's a magic apparatus-like part on the disk section which he uses to directly put the magic power by hand, when he releases his hand the tool begins move. What? Are you interested with that toy?"

I leave Arisa who elatedly call me "Childish", and head toward the crowd.
When the demonstration is finished, the crowd disperses.
According to Appraisal, the thing put on the stall is called [Rolling Ring].
Since the description is like usual, I don't read it. The disk diameter is about 20cm, it's big for a spinning top. The market price is 2 gold coins.

Some children pester the shopkeeper to spin the disk again but he refused since he has no magic power left.

"Hello, if you're fine with it, I could pour the magic power for you."
"My bad nii-san. Hold the disk with both of your hands, then circulate magic power from your right hand to your left. Blue line light will lit on the disk after a bit, you can stop pouring magic power then and gently place the disk on the stand."

It's completely filled after I pour 2 MP.
Looking at Timer, I release it after I found the right time.

The AR displays the number of rotation when I stare at the disk.
It's doing 600 rotations per 10 minute. Moreover the spinning speed is constant until it run out of magic power. Depending on its torque, it could be useful for a lot of things.

Some people who are interested like Arisa earlier are coming, but soon go away after hearing the price.

"Shopkeeper-san, I want to try something. I will buy it if it broke, so will you let me?"
"If possible, I'd like you to buy it before you break it..."

What the shopkeeper is saying is a matter of course, but maybe because couldn't sell it at all, for even the tiniest possibility of selling it, he allows me.

I ask Arisa to put her magic into the disk. It consumes 5 MP this time.
Are there differences between individuals?
The rotation speed is the same as earlier. I press the spinning disk from both sides after 3 minutes has elapsed. The children are booing, but I ignore them.
The rotation is surprisingly strong. It has about the same power as a radio controlled motor.

>[Experiment Skill Acquired]
>[Verification Skill Acquired]

After I take out gold coins, the shopkeeper readily tell me the maker since he has nothing to lose. It seems that it's the work of Jahad, an old magician from the royal capital.
Seems that he's famous for creating useless magic tools.

I buy 4 for 1 gold coins. It looks useful for a lot of things.

"You, such things "Arisa You're being rude to master."

Arisa is rebuked by Liza. She was unreserved with me all this time but it seems that [You] is unacceptable.
[TLN: Okay, this might sound confusing but Arisa is using [Anta] to call Satou up there, it's informal and slightly rude version of "you" in Japanese. She actually never directly call Satou with "you" pronoun before, she alway use master when she does and not use personal pronoun at all in a lot of her dialogs with Satou but English language doesn't allow that (well, I could but it would sounds just strange with lots of passives) so I used "you" carelessly before this chapter (although it's not exactly wrong, it's not exactly right either, so confusing)

For more information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_pronouns]
"U~ I'm sorry master."

Arisa is unusually obedient.
Because Liza's anger has force. I'm glad that she is usually mild-mannered.

"Then, what did you want to say?"
"Rather than toys, I want master to buy me magic books."
"I have books for Life magic, do you want it?"
"I'd like something more useful for battle!"

Yup, I could understand the lament of the Life magic author for a bit.
I want a recovery magic user from the present members.
I promise to bring her along when I go buy map. I think that the magic shop is still closed now, but she still insists.

◇

"Young master, could I have your time for a bit?"

I didn't think that I was the one who got called, but when I ignore the caller, he looks troubled.
He looks like a gentlemen from the outside, but his eyes are like snake.

"Can I help you with something?"
"Does young master familiar with an alchemy material called Dragon White Stone?"
"No, I'm uneducated with it."

The gentleman keeps talking with exaggerated grieving gestures.

"I think you might know this but in making antidote, one need different materials for each type of poison."

"However, this Dragon White Stone, processed with alchemy, could be used to cure all type of poison!"

"Of course, if you live normally, then you probably won't ever get poisoned."

"Yet, for Explorers who enter labyrinth, they don't know when they will encounter monster with poison so antidote is necessary."

"But, for the sake of bringing the loots back, Explorers are compelled to bring as little supply as possible."

"Therefore, antidotes made from Dragon White Stones are traded at high price in labyrinth city."

Without letting me cut into it, he had begun a solo sales talk.
I've been ignoring it, so I want him to just get to the point.

"This Dragon White Stone, especially! Especially for the young master (...), I'll give you special price for it!"

In short, you want me to buy the Dragon White Stone because it's selling well in labyrinth city, that was long just for this.

"I understand the story now, but why don't you go to the labyrinth city yourself?"
"That's what should have been but I must go to the south after this. Therefore, I will hand it over to young master who overflows with business talent."

On what basis is he saying that I'm overflowing with business talent? Beside, he should sell it to a firm rather than an individual in a place like this. Suspicious, doubtlessly.

"This is a sample, I also have the certificate."

He takes out a pebble sized item, it's a Dragon White Stone according to appraisal. I still don't know if this is really an ingredient for cure-all antidote. I want reverse look-up too.
The market price for that size is 1 copper coin.

I try to properly decline it, but the sham gentleman strongly press on it. I can't separate away easily.
In the end, we decided to go to his carriage to look at the stocks.

On top of the carriages, clusters of very small rocks wrapped in waterproof cloth are put.
The sham gentleman pulls the cloth to show off the white rocks(...) and continues the sales talk.

I see a person, who's just right for this, coming here. Let's drag him into this.

"How is it, this quality here. If you bring this to the labyrinth city then it's going to worth close to 100 gold coins. Because of the brilliance shown by young master, I will hand it over."

"Unfortunately I don't have 100 gold coins on hands. At most, I only have 20 gold coins."

The sham gentleman looks slightly bitter. But I saw the corner of his eyes moving slightly.

"This is difficult, If it's 30 gold coins then I would've yielded..."

"Is that so, too bad. Well then, let's end this talk here."

And so I pull straight away.
The sham gentleman hurriedly get back.

"No, let's count on the future of young master, I will yield for 20 gold coins this time, for investment."

Ignoring the sham gentleman, I call the gnome who's passing through on the side. It's the manager of the alchemy shop.

"Hello manager-san"
"The heck are you?"
"I'm the beginner who bought the alchemy set in your shop the other day."
"Oh yeah, how's your training?"
"Yes, It's still quite difficult."
"Well yeah, it's not something that could be done overnight."

"Right manager-san, this gentleman here is trading something called Dragon White Stone. How about stocking some for manager-san's shop?"

Saying so, I point at the lumps of rock salt(...) on the carriage. That's right, the sham gentleman scam tactic is by first showing the real Dragon White Stone pebble to someone and then sell rock salts as the real thing.

"What are you saying, those are rock salts."
"Eeeeh~! So those are rock salts!"

I exaggeratedly act surprised and say "What is the meaning of this!", sending the fraud into panic.
If he run away, then I thought of letting him go but the manager's bodyguard with big body quickly constrict the fraud and drag him away.
You guys are too quick...

"I got dragged into a boring farce."

The manager looks truly indignant.

"Thanks for your help."
"Fuhn, you bastard must've known it from the start with appraisal. Just when I went to flea market for finding bargain on raw materials, I was made to dispose small peon instead."

To soothe him, I tell him about the thing with spinning top earlier, after hearing that he leaves me alone and quickly goes to that stall.
He probably got an idea to use it for mixing materials.

# 4-6. Carriage and Coachman

*

Satou's here. I do have a driver license but I have never actually drive for years.
As a man who lived in the center of the city, I was already satisfied with the public transport.
Although if I had my own car, it'd had been convenient in a date...

◇

"We only have horse-carriage cabs here. If you want to buy a carriage then order it on the merchant guild inside the inner wall."

I tried talking to the people on the stable areas near the gate, but they didn't sell it there. Is this like trying to buy a car in a taxi stand? I'm a bit ashamed.

"The merchant guild should have them if you're fine with used one. They were looking for buyers if I'm not mistaken."

A different coachman interrupts while we were talking.
I thank him, then I ride on his carriage cab to the merchant guild. I asked Arisa and Liza to carry the luggages back to the hotel.

◇

The coachman who has escorted me to the merchant guild kindly mediates with the guild for me.

"We don't usually sell to people outside of merchant guild member, but since you're introduced by Yosagu-san, let's make an exception."

Yosagu is the coachman's name. It doesn't really matter, but the merchant here is Sunifun-san.
He shows me two carriages. One of them is a covered wagon. The inside is about 4 tatami wide I think? The other one is a box-shaped carriage. It's about 2 meter high, and with a luggage space on the ceiling. The width inside is the same.
The covered wagon is 10 gold coins. The box-shaped carriage is 30 gold coins. The box-shaped carriage is more robust and safer, but you will need 4-6 horses to pull it. The covered wagon depends on its load, if the load is light then you only need 1-2 horses.

I wanted the safe one so I was going to buy the box-shaped carriage, but I'm told that since the center of gravity is tall, the operation of the carriage is difficult, so I stopped.
I have a car license, but driving a carriage? Since I don't have any experience on it, let's proceed carefully.

I ask to be shown the inside before buying. The inside of the covered wagon is, how do I say it, normal. Under the seat for coachman, there's a hidden space for valuables. It seems that it was remodeled by the previous owner.

"I'd like to buy this covered wagon, but could you also prepare the horses together?"

"Right, we could prepare two Gontsu horses from the guild for you. We could provide four if it's donkey, but depending on the load and the destination, they may not be suitable."

I tell him that the destination is labyrinth city and the load are 6 peoples and their necessities, he recommends the Gontsu horses for the task. If I

carry heavy luggages then, even if it's slower, he says that donkeys are better.
If you want to be fast, then Shuberien horses are the ones you want but it seems that they all have been brought by the territory government.

The price for two horses and the wagon are 20 gold coins but I've managed to get it down to 18.
Sunifun-san is surprised to see me paying it fully and in cash.

Normally people will get the bill first, and pay at the later date. "I'm quite hasty, I used to get scolded by the people on my house because of it.", I use excuse as if I'm a son of a noble who's ignorant with the world.

"Satou-sama, since 6 people are going to the labyrinth city, it would be wasteful if you only bring an empty load."

Is that so?
Certainly, half of the space would be usable. Furthermore, me and Arisa also have plenty of storage capabilities.

"Do you have any products to recommend?"

"Right then, I think that crossbow and bolt would have demands in labyrinth city. Since the crossbows from Seryuu city are made to shoot Wyvern on the sky, its specs are higher than from other region so it would sell like hot cakes. Also, since it's currently cheap to procure goat leathers and furs due to the season, I think it would be easy to profit on it."

"Excuse me, do Satou-sama has commercial right?"
"Unfortunately, I do not."

So a permit is really necessary?

"That's unfortunate, we can only issue a permit for 10 gold coins."

"That's quite expensive."

"One doesn't need permit to do the trades in small quantity inside city, but if you enter a city without one then you won't be exempt from the tariff tax so the profit will be almost nil."

I see then I should put them inside the storage to avert the tariff...
But there's no reason to earn money illegally.

"If you don't go to other city then there's an item that is exempted from tax in the labyrinth city, but since the tax for it in other cities is quite high, there's really no meaning to it."

"What kind of item is it?"

"Because there is no demand in this city, they don't have name here, but it's in constant demand in the labyrinth city. It's an alchemy material called Dragon White Stone."

I think my face shows it when I heard the name. Since Sunifun-san asks for it, I tell him about the fraud I met in the east district.

"I see, it's natural that you had such face. However, the ones here are guaranteed by the merchant association."

It seems that they sell one small barrel for 10 gold coins, the same as the market price. By the way, it seems that you could easily sell that amount for 20 gold coins in labyrinth city.
If I could sell it for twice the price then wouldn't I net quite a profit?
So I thought, but he said that because of the tariffs for the entering cities on the way and the transportation cost, the profit end up to be quite small.

"If the stones doesn't sell, then you can bring it to the merchant guild,

they will buy it at the price you buy here. If you wish, we could make a letter of endorsement to guarantee the quality."

I was almost made to buy in large quantity, but I declined by saying that there won't be enough space for water and food if I bought to many.

I end up buying 6 small barrels of Dragon White Stone, 100 pieces of goat leather, 100 bundle of wool, 10 crossbows and 1000 bolts.

Because they're all 70 gold coins even after I lowered the price, I sign a temporary contract, and will pay for it tomorrow along with the products exchange.

◇

Right now, I'm riding the covered wagon outside the Seryuu city ...That said, it's not like we have departed.

After I had finished the business at the guild, outside, I asked Sunifun-san if he could introduce me to someone who could teach me how to operate the wagon. There, Yosagu-san who were waiting for me to return said, "Then let this old bone teach you.", and that was how the flow went.

As Yosagu-san starts to teach the basic of operating a wagon.

>[Marshaling Skill Acquired]

Like always, I allocate 1 skill point to it and activate it. ...So it wasn't included in Operation skill.

It's awkward, but I can control the wagon for once. During the practice, I raise the skill level by 1, it's not as high as Yosagu-san skill level at 3, but

since I could already control the wagon fine, I stop raising the level.

"Young guy do learn fast isn't it."
"Thanks to Yosagu-san good teaching."

Disregarding the cheat from skill, Yosagu-san's teaching really is good. I had failed once but he firmly taught me what to be careful with. He might be suited to be an instructor.
Particularly when I treated it like a car, forgetting that the horses are creatures, he was mad many times...

"You're good enough like this."
"Thank you very much."

"Next I will teach you how to fix and release the yoke that connects the horse to the wagon. The horse's fatigue depends on how good you are at this. If you value your horses, then don't cut corner on this."

Yosagu-san looks more serious than when he teach me to ride the wagon. He probably quite likes horses. After about 1 hour of strict training, I finally got a passing mark from Yosagu-san.

I thought that it had took a long time, but Yosagu-san said that one normally only scratch the surface in half a day, he's impressed.

Yosagu-san tells me that he was a coachman working for a caravan before he worked as a cab coachman in Seryu city. He teaches me various things like crossbows and spears are good for defending the wagon, or that I should always resupply drinking water at cities since they're not always available at the indicated spot on the map, or that when we take a break, I should not forget to give rock salt to the horse along with water.

◇

We're going to the merchant guild with the wagon. Since Yosagu-san's carriage is left on the guild, we're going there to fetch it.
During the way there, Yosagu-san talks about the brothels in Seryuu city. It seems that he's into big breasts.
As a thanks for teaching me various things, I've decided to luxuriously treat him at the shop he recommends, tomorrow evening. Since there are a lot of loli around me recently, this will be fun.

◇

Before returning to the Monzen inn with the covered wagon, I go to receive my clothes. I come just as the delivery, so I'm able to meet the rumored tailor. I feel like I know her face, then I realized that she's the bath tub partner (lol) I met on the first day, it's embarrassing. It's surprising that she also remembers me, but there's no real development, and I thank her for the quality of her clothes as an etiquette.

◇

I ride the wagon into the courtyard of the Monzen inn. Martha-chan is just right at it, so I tell her that I've bought the wagon. Since there are rooms in the stable, seems that it's all right. However, I have to pay for the parking fee since it's a different charge from normal inn room.

"Wilcome home~?"
"Nano desu~."

When I'm talking with Martha-chan, Pochi and Tama run from the shade

behind the courtyard. Tama probably wanted to say welcome. Two people also appear from the shade. The helper girl (Yuni) is also together with them. I wonder if she doesn't have prejudice against demi-human?

Arisa and the girls seems to have been playing in the shade of garden plants of the courtyard. No, that words isn't right. They're trying to learn the letters from the learning cards.

At first, it seems that Martha-chan is teaching, acting as the teacher. But in the middle, "Let's put the card face up and read the letter, then if you can guess the content in the back right, it's yours to take.", Arisa proposed that game-like study session, but since the other members weren't familiar with the game, they became quite addicted to it.

It has already been continuing for two hours. The one who win the most is Arisa, followed by Pochi, Lulu, Yuni, Tama, and Liza in order.

I leave the horses for everyone else to take care, and bring only Arisa to the room. Lulu's expression becomes a bit cloudy, but I can just clear the misunderstanding later.

# 4-7. Satou's Secret

*

Satou's here. I have finished doing self-analysis and self-development during the days of job hunting.

I'm reluctant to look back at it.

◇

I sit on the bed while putting the bag on the side.
Arisa is taking off her mantle as soon as she enters our bedroom, and when she started to take off her clothes too, I stop her with a chop to her head.

"Ouchie~ What, didn't you lust for me?"
"Let's decide that after 10 years."
"No way~ This is a chance to violate the precious body of a boy..."

While chattering pointlessly, Arisa still proceeds to wear her clothes back and sits on the opposite bed.

"You said something about consultation at noon right? Did anything happen?"
"Wonder where should I begin..."
"Why don't you tell me all about it? They said that the king has donkey ears~."
[TLN: http://www.worldstories.org.uk/stories/story/88-the-king-with-donkey-ears]

Doesn't that story end with everything coming to light?

"Then how about removing the thing that you don't want to say? Though I

couldn't tell it to anyone anyway if you order me not to~."

"That's right..."

The disposable long-range skill that I had when I first got here?  Then I change the story a little by only telling that it was used to annihilate each communities of scale tribes.
I speak in quite a firm tone, but Arisa wryly smiles for some reason.

"What's wrong, I'm not bragging you know?"
"I understand, but unique skill is our trump card, you should hide it properly."

"Sorry, I'll be careful."
"Then, what is the consultation about? Were those scale tribe communities members of Liza's race?"

Arisa listens while hugging her knee on top of the bed. Since her new skirt is long, I'm relieved that her underwear isn't visible.

Liza's tribe lived in wetlands far away from here, they were wiped out after a dispute with the weasel tribe many years ago, Liza told me the story during the frog grill party back then. It seems that she was kidnapped by the slave-hunting human when she was wandering with her family. She also said that she and her family were fearful with Dragon Valley so they didn't dare to get close to it.

"No, it's not that, it's just that even though I accidentally annihilated a whole tribe, I don't feel any guilt. I feel like the guilt was easily and completely turned off like an ON/OFF switch. As if someone is manipulating my heart..."

If I didn't almost got manipulated by Arisa, I probably wouldn't think of this either...

"They call this Paranoia in my old life! but that won't satisfy you, right"
"It's different from paranoia, it's as if the feeling of『Guilt』is vacuumed into closet... It's hard to explain."

"Fuh~n? Weren't you originally cold-blooded?"
"Since I was a programmer I do like to think efficiently, but I don't think I was cold-blooded. When the game I made was made fun of (on the internet), I became depressed for days."
"Hee~ So you were a game developer? What kind of game was it?"

"I'll talk about it later. Rather than that"
"Do you want to know the cause for the ON/OFF switch feeling?"

Arisa who covered my words with hers, subtly smiles mischievously.

"Perhaps your MND (mental strength) attribute is too high?"
"It's certainly high but..."

"If your VIT (Durability) is high, you become able to take many hit right?  MND is the mental version of that. In the first place, you're purposely letting yourself be tormented by guilt, unless you're a masochist, it should disappear fast."

Is that so?
I thought that it was someone's doing, but it was merely a problem of my stat...

◇

"Then the next."
"Ou ke~y, come at m~e"

Arisa is playing around, but it's reassuring to have someone to confide in like this.

"Based on the logic earlier, if I have high INT (Intelligence) then I should have good memory, yet I feel like I become extremely more forgetful than before. What is the meaning of this?"

"Uwah~ eh~, you have amnesia even being this young?"

I'm about to chop her but Arisa quickly takes a guard.
Because her flustered posture looks cute, I'll let this one slide.

"I'm joking, even though comprehension and memory do go up with INT, it doesn't mean that they go up equally. If high INT means that you can't forget then there wouldn't be any careless scholars right?"

No way...
My mentor was a professor extremely close to getting a Nobel prize. His careless episodes, like a revolving lantern, cross my mind.
[TLN: His or her, who knows? blame the kare]

"...That means, I was really just being paranoid?"

"Looks like it~."

Arisa throws herself onto the bed and laughs.

Speaking of which, I originally became paranoid because of this girl's mind magic attempt...
Even while thinking that, I'm not childish enough to utter it on my mouth.

◇

"Hey Arisa."
"What? Do you want to get sticky?"
"I'll refrain from that."

This girl really likes to utter one word too many.

"What are levels and skills in the first place?"
"Like the ones from RPG, as it is?"
"Any other meanings beside that?"
"I don't know. I didn't ask when I met god, and he didn't answer when I tried to call him after reincarnating."

"Just tell me as far as you know."
"Right then, I guess you can call skill a condensation of experience and knowledge? When you have skill, don't you feel that you『Somehow』know the what and how?  Maybe it's close to intuition. For example, you could cook even without the skill, but if someone with high level skill cooks with the same ingredients and tools, he will make something more delicious."

I see... However, the appraisal and market price estimation skill are quite obvious though?
Also, 'that' is different too?  I confirm it with Arisa.

"How about something like the contract skill, which clearly demonstrates its effect?"
"Well, contract skill is a kind of magic skill. It has chanting and it also uses magic power for the contract. But it's still basically the same as other skill you know?  Even if you don't have the skill, you could still chant and use the contract spell if you have abundant magic power. However, like other magic skills, if you don't have the contract skill, the required magic power to cast the spell will be drastically increased and

the success rate will sharply drop, making it realistically impossible."

I ask about skill level too.

"Here are the standards for skill level; level 1 is Beginner, level 3 is Full-fledged, level 5 is Skilled, level 7 is Expert, and level 9 is Genius. It is said that level 10 is Godly class~ but I've never seen it~."

Is that so, I generally raised my skills to level 10... No wonder I always got the market price right, and almost always succeed in haggling.

"Don't unique skills have level?"

"Nope. This was said by the god when I reincarnated, unique skill is a fragment of god power so there is no level. Master it well, he said~"

A fragment of god power?
Certainly Meteor Shower is befitting of its name, but beside that the others are subtle.

"What?! What's with that subtle expression?"

"No well, when you said that unique skill is a fragment of god power, I thought that my unique skill sure is subtle...."

"Enough to make that subtle expression on your face?"

Although I don't have proof for this confidence, I decide to tell her about [Menu].
Despite her behavior and speech, Arisa seems reliable, she looks to be useful if I tell her.

I don't intend to tell her in detail. I'll just roughly tell her about the functions.

"I'm telling because my unique skill is Menu with the same performance as the one Arisa and the heroes have"
"Well, I will listen if you want, but it's better if you keep it a secret you know?"

Arisa advices me.

"I don't mind, however don't tell a word to anyone. This is an『Order』."
"Okkey~ I'll bring it to my grave."

Arisa kneels on the bed, and haughtily taps her flat chest.

"My Menu has Self-Status, Status Check, Hide Skill and Inventory like Arisa's skills."
"As expected of unique skill, it's a cheat~ But Isn't it really common for a unique skill?"

"That's not all. Although I can choose to allocate point at which skill, I can't choose to do so for all skills like Arisa. It's only available for skills that I acquire by experience."
"Uwah, isn't it a degraded version of unique skill?"
"The Hide Skill from menu is superior. It can hide any skills."
"Looks like it~"

It seems that Arisa has guessed it.

"I mean, didn't you use Appraisal skill in the city? Your line of sight was unnatural, and your decision was too accurate~."

Th, this girl, is she an agent from somewhere?!

"I'm good at observing people. And you also have crisis sensing skill right? Although your movement with the accident faker was really great,

it was amazing how you notice it in the first place."

"That's also part of the Menu. I can understand the position of people nearby with the radar display. There's also map display. It also has an auto-mapping function. It gradually fills in accordance to my walking range. It was a big help inside the labyrinth."

"I see, it's truly『Menu』. Didn't you think that you were inside a game for having such unique skill without any explanation?"
"I thought that I was in a dream instead."

"Well, it's unbelievable I know~." Arisa nods understandingly.

◇

While we're at it, Arisa-sensei also teaches me about level.

"...That's why you can level up by fighting or studying, so anyway, if you actively learn new things you gain experience. When the experience reach a fixed value then your level will be raised. It seems that experience goes up faster if you fight certain monsters."

It seems that she heard about the monsters thing from the soldier and knight on her homeland.
It gave far more experiences compared to monster they normally hunted.

"Hoo?  Do you know why?"
"Not at all, I've never fought a monster."

"But" Arisa continues.

"If it's master, then you should know right? From what I've heard from

Liza and the girls, they raised 10 levels in 1 day in the labyrinth. That's higher than the result from my 7 years of desperate studies you know?"
"Certainly, it was an abnormal growth when you think about it."

"Isn't it~. That's why, in order to increase our survival chance, we should go to labyrinth city to level up~."

She said the same thing back at noon...
Come to think of it, she said another strange thing back then.

"By the way, what the heck is demon lord season?"
"I wonder if they don't call it that around here? In my country we call it for the season when the demon lord attack after about 66 years cycle."

# 4-8. Demon Lord Season

*

Satou's here. I love cherry blossom season.

The dancing falling petals, and the cheerful people welcoming new life.

I like how there are many fireworks too~

◇

"Demon lord you say, the kind that wants to rule the world?"
"Yes the one who wants to destroy the world."

"Where is it coming from?"
"I don't know, maybe hell?"

Hell huh~.

"Don't look at me with those eyes~ From what was written in the book, it's said that they're invaders from foreign world."
"Is foreign world different from another world?"
"I'm not a scholar so I don't know."

That's right huh, let's ask a scholar next time.

"Is that 66 years cycle thing true?"
"Yep, there are records where the demon lord appear a bit sooner or later, but they generally seem to appear in 66 years."
"So, it has almost been 66 years now?"
"It was 62 years ago since the last demon lord, but seems that it has been stealthily gaining power while in hiding. Since the demon lord before the

last appeared 132 years ago, it wouldn't be strange if the current demon lord appears any day now."

Arisa frowns forming duck mouth. The beautiful little girl look is ruined.

"I see, any sign for its coming?"
"If the world is in crisis, the god will tell it to the oracle~."

As expected of fantasy.

"However if we wait for the oracle then there wouldn't be enough time to raise the hero, so around 3-5 years before the 66 years cycle, they summon the hero."

With that kind of period, it's no wonder that countries will have a lot of time in their hand to prepare.

"Do we know the location where the demon lord will spawn?"
"It seems that they mostly appear in labyrinths or the outskirts around it"

Labyrinth again...

"According to the book I read, it may be because it's easy for the demon lord to raise armies there since there are earth veins deep inside labyrinth."
"Couldn't it just attack head-on without raising armies?"
"Who knows? Maybe the cost to cross between worlds is great. This is based only from circumstantial evidence, but it seems that only high level demons and the demon lord are able to cross worlds."

So the weak can't cross between worlds?
Or rather, if they could appear in the vicinity of labyrinth then.

"Then, this Seryuu city is in danger too..."

"Absolutely not."

Arisa nods with serious look.

"You're very sure."
"Because, this place is close to the Dragon Valley right? If they appear in a place like this, they will be exterminated by hordes of dragons. The legend even says that there's a Dragon God there."

"Are dragons and the demon lord in bad term?"
"They're natural enemies. Normal dragons wouldn't be a match for the demon lord but if it's from sub-divine class like heavenly dragon, then the dragon is stronger for sure."

Dragons are amazing.
The threat of demon lord should be resolved if we just put one heavenly dragon near the labyrinth but...

"If the dragons are that strong then why would they even bother summoning a hero from another world?"
"That's because~ The battle between dragons(.) and the demon lord(.) is too incredible. From songs sang by minstrel about the hero from long ago, there's a story where the hero is defeated by the demon lord. After that, the demon lord destroyed several small countries and met a dragon. The demon lord was defeated in the end but the battle made two great countries sunk into sea of flames. From the rumor said by the minstrel, even the large empire that preceded Saga empire perished because it got mixed up in the fight between the dragon and the demon lord."

I see now~ It's like eliminating a robber with a ballistic missile huh.

According to Arisa, there was once a labyrinth which the dragon encamped. However, from human's viewpoint, both dragon and demon lord were threats, so they made the hero at that time to fight it. It's

unknown which one won, but it's known that there are no labyrinths encamped by dragons right now.

◇

The demon which appeared in Seryuu city might have come to check on the situation of the dragon.

If the fact that the dragons are no more then this city might become the target of the demon lord.
I bring the subject to Arisa.

"Even excluding the dragon, wouldn't it be 100 years before this city become a target?"
"Why?"
"The labyrinth is growing. It gives birth to monsters and sucks on the life of the adventurers who come seeking the magic core to grow. When the labyrinth vastly deepened, the monsters also become much stronger."
"I see... a young labyrinth isn't good enough for the demon lord."

Hmm? Wait...

"Hey, by any chance, are labyrinths tools for demon lord raid?"
"Well yes, there are some who think that."
"Then, isn't it better to destroy the labyrinth?"

If we destroy the labyrinth (Spawn Point) then the demon lord will have fewer army forces and the hero's job will get way easier isn't it?

"That may be so, but there are 6 labyrinths in this continent beside the one here. Suppose the probability of demon lord appearing in each labyrinth is equal, in 400 years, it was recognized as calamity whether or

not it appeared. Furthermore, since the labyrinth produces usable materials like magic cores, people treat it as if it's a mine."

"I see, if we destroy it then people will hold grudges huh."
"Yes, Kubooku kingom was the leader of the small countries in neighborhood during the time when its labyrinth was alive, but when they destroyed the Dungeon Core, they rapidly declined."

"Could the destroyed Dungeon Core be revived?"
"Isn't that so?  I wasn't around when they performed the ritual so I don't know the detail though."

So the labyrinth is appealing enough for people to even perform such an abominable ritual...
The saying that human greed knows no bounds is really true~

◇

"Still, you sure know a lot, Arisa."
"Now you're saying that after thoroughly questioning me?"

Arisa is amazed. I was sure that she would have said, "You can revere me more~", but if we have Arisa test, then she had failed.

"There were a lot of documents pertaining to the labyrinth in the storehouse of the royal family. The explanations earlier may contain deduction and hypothesis, so take heed okay?"

She's good at delivering flood of information. ...I'm nearly drowning from it though.

"I got the things about the demon lord and hero from books, documents,

minstrels and storytellers' song tales. That's why the fiction and non-fiction may got mixed up. I did carefully examined it though~."

It seems that those were popular as entertainments.

"As for the details about skills and levels, they're from my own experience and the result of observation."

"Is that all you want to know?", she cutely tilts her head. Her figure is such that it would have stirred me with a craving to protect her if I didn't know her true nature.

"That's right, I forgot to ask anyone this, how many days is a year?"

According to Arisa, 1 year is 10 months, 1 month is 30 days. There is no concept of week, a month is divided by 3 part consisting of upper moon, middle moon and lower moon.

By the way I thought that my clock is off by 4 hours but now I know that one day is 28 hours here.
Compared to yearly unit, this world system is shorter for about 4%.

◇

Since there are still two hours before sunset, I ask Arisa and the girls to buy necessities for our journey.

"Then I'm counting on you to shop for rock salt and preserved foods. Also buy two barrels for water."

"Ye~s.", "Shopping~?", "Nano desu.", I received lively replies.

"For how many days of shares should we buy?"
"Buy the shares for 10 days. Considering the season right now, normal foods should be fine for the first 3 days. The preserved foods shouldn't expire for 240 days, is it about right?  Seems that we would need quite an amount."
"I'll ask Martha-cchi if there is any wholesale shop around. And, since we probably wouldn't be able to carry it, I'll ask for delivery."
"Yeah, please do."

She's reliable at the time for shopping.

I'd be glad to accompany them, but I decide to go back to the room because there is something that I want to confirm.

◇

There's something that I didn't tell Arisa.

Dragons are natural enemies of demons.

Demons want to eliminate dragons.

Who summoned me to this world?

For what reason did I get summoned to this world?

Why do my power have discrepancies with those of the heroes?

Yes, I am,

"The one who summoned me might be the demon or the demon lord is it...."

Those words weren't questions...

# 4-9. Things That Could be Done Alone

*

Satou's here. The chemistry experiment during the days of junior school was such a fantastic time, wasn't it?

I also remember that there are differences between the thing I've learned in school and the actual practice.

◇

It's aggravating to be filled with bad imaginations with no way to prove it. Even if it's the truth, the heroes should win against the demon lord like how it usually goes. If they lose, then I'll take responsibility of defeating the demon lord in place of the dragons.

I take a deep breath several times and I'm becoming calm.
Having high MND (Mental Strength) surprisingly has its merit.

◇

I come back to my room. Returning to the main subject.
I want to do further verification and alchemy. Since the chanting practice need to be done steadily, I have no choice but to do it on the way to the labyrinth city.

First, let's verify the storage.

I take out the meal.
It's still warm.

I lightly bite it. The taste is still the same.

I put back the remaining meal to the storage.
It's a bit late, but the item name is [Seryuu Grill]. It needs a bit more ingenuity.

I add a new memo called Storage Verification. I write the date and the state on the memo.

For now, It can keep something warm, maybe it even has function to freeze state of things. I write such on the memo. I don't think that it could delay or stop time, that's way too improbable.

This time I take out the Seryuu Grill that I've put in Item Box. This one is already cold. The taste is like a cold grill. It's not rotten. Since it's only been half a day, it's natural.

Let's write that the item box doesn't retain warmth.

Next, I'm testing whether it's possible to move item between the storage and the item box.

I mark a copper coin with ink.

I try putting it inside the item box but it can't go in.
It seems that with skill level 1, it can't enter. I raise the skill level to 2 and inside it goes. I try putting various accessories, and it seems that it can only hold 4 pieces of 4 types of items. Is it the skill level squared?  Let's write this on the memo.

When I open storage window in the menu, an item box tab has appeared. I drag the item to the storage.

When I open the item box and look inside it, the transfer is successful.

I try doing the same thing in reverse, the item can be moved without problem.

Accessing the Item Box from the Storage consume no MP.

I put this information as a postscript on the storage verification memo.
Let's think how to use this next time.

Next, I'm trying if I can search the content of books inside the storage. It should be convenient to check it secretly in situation like the trouble with the dragon white stone today.
I was able to search in explanation in the game. Therefore I want to check if I could search for contents ...There were no books in the game though.

I tap the [Royal City Tour] book inside the storage and choose search on the popped-up menu.
I search for [Castle], then the explanations about castle are shown on the search hit. It seems that it can search with no problem.
The search results are displayed.
Ah, I've always wanted this function in real life~ I wouldn't have needed to scan books or OCR! Fantasy is awesome!

I suddenly come up with something and immediately try it.
If I could see the search result then couldn't I able to read the content of the book?
Since there is no browse option on the pop-up menu, I search for blank and it goes well.
I could read the entirety like it's on PC with scroll. It feels like a PDF file.
Since I could search for words with this, this is more convenient for reading books.

Next I try moving the book to the Item Box.

Unfortunately, this one can't do searching.
I wonder what's the difference?

◇

I take out the alchemy set and put it on top of the table on the corner o the room. The book remain in the storage. If it's like this, even in the dark, I could read the book like the menu.

I'm reading [Introductory to Alchemy]. It's the book that the grandfather gnome firmly told me to read first. Rather than a book, shouldn't this be called a pamphlet? It's a think book with about 20 pages.

The book starts with explanations of the tools. Moreover, it features illustrations so beginners won't get the tools wrong. It's the book that the grandfather emphasized me to read first.

First, I take out the mortar and the pestle. The mortar is not the commonly known white porcelain but something pinkish in color. According to appraisal, it's made from agate. Isn't agate a jewel?

Following the book, I grind a reagent with 1 dried medicinal plant together, and then I put the crushed medicinal plant to a small bowl filled with water with a thin metal rod.
The compounding is complete 5 minutes from the start. Since it's the first thing to do for beginners, it's very easy.

>[Compounding Skill Acquired]

I immediately allocate skill point to the maximum and activate it.
The finished aqueous solution is [Antipyretic Medicine]. Judging from Appraisal, [Antipyretic Medicine -3] is under the name, while the detail

says [Liquid medicine for lowering fever. The effect is extremely low, it's just a mere consolation]. This is my first time doing compounding, it can't be helped that it's low quality.

◇

"Those who have magic power go to chapter 2, those who don't go to chapter 4" is written in the next page of the introductory book.
It feels like a manual for business software, or rather, a game book from years ago.

Chapter 2 is about basic refining. Seems that I have to make actual potions. According to the book, drugs made by compounding and potions made by refining have different effects even though they're similar. Production of potions need magic catalyst and MP, in exchange the effect will be displayed in real time.

I continue to practice the refining according to the book. I put the potion I made earlier inside a metal beaker. Then I mix it with two reagents there.
Seems that I have to pour magic power before the reagents are dissolved. I tuck the beaker between my hands and imagine magic flowing from my right hand to the left.
It was like this with the spinning top, you pour magic by circulating from your right hand to left, I wonder if this is some kind of rule? Or is it just a simple custom?

The two reagents begin to shine faintly when I pour magic power. Since the room is dim, it glitters nicely. Seems that it's complete after it stops glittering.

>[Refining Skill Acquired]

It's not an alchemy skill huh. I also get refining skill to the max.
The completed Potion is an Antipyretic Potion -4. Since it's wasteful to discard it, I put it inside the bisque pot and put it inside the Storage.

◇

I open the menu to save the compounding recipes in the memo. The menu has a new tab, Production. I open the tab, and [Compound: Antipyretic Medicine], and [Refine: Antipyretic Potion] from the earlier are there. Not just them, there are also [Woodcraft: Club (Improvised)], [Composite: Insect Leg Spear (Improvised)], and [Composite: Insect Leg Spear (Improved)].

I'm sure that it wasn't there before, I wonder if I need to know 5 recipes as the prerequisite?  Or maybe it need recipe beside improvised one. But since it's a unique skill, it's useless to try to verify it, so I stop.

I try tapping on the [Compound: Antipyretic Medicine]. There are 4 sub-menus, they're Compound, Inspect Recipe, Delete Recipe, and Detail. Compound seems to be disabled, it's grayed out. I though that maybe I could do compounding inside the Storage, but unfortunately it doesn't seem to be so. Even after I store the tools and reagents into the Storage, it's still disabled. There might be some conditions.

Then I continue the training to the end of the 6 chapters in the introductory book. Because there is one recipe in each chapter, I got to remember, [Compound: Painkiller], [Compound: Ointment], [Refine: Lower Recovery Medicine], and [Refine: Painkilling Magic Medicine (Potion)], those four.

Probably because I've maxed out the skills to maximum, all the medicines

after chapter 3 are attached with [+5]. [The effect is extremely high, it's the highest quality] is written. I'm thinking of verifying the difference in effect next time.

◇

I'm about to start practicing the fifth chapter of the introductory book but...
[TLN: Yes, apparently this is happening before the last two paragraphs before the last ◇]

There are signs of someones' holding their breath on the other side of the door. The two luminous point shown on the radar haven't moved from awhile ago.
I stealthily approach the door, and open it at once.

Arisa and Martha-chan come rolling in as if being pulled by the door.

"What are you girls doing?"

I listen to the two while looking from above. My voice has become a bit flat.

"Na, nay.", Arisa is speaking in Kansai dialogue for some reason.
[TLN: Imagine "Ch, Chau nen." in Kana Ueda's (Rin Tohsaka) voice]
"I, I was just curious since I saw Arisa clinging to the door.", Martha-chan.
Yet you've also been clinging for more than 5 minutes, aren't you?

The two shaking girls are about to step away. They suddenly turn around and about to dash away to the corridor.
I quickly grab the nape of the two and restrict them.

"Wonder what were you really doing?", I cross-examine again.

"I'm sorry, I was tempted to see Satou-san embarrassing moment so I peeked."

Martha-chan gallantly apologizes.

"Uu~ because. A boy who's living together with girls!  Went back to his room alone?!  Don't you think that it's the job of the guardian to see what kind of foolery would unfold?"

Who's the guardian.
Furthermore, foolery... I don't have the mindset of a middle-schooler.

I release the gallant Martha-chan. Arisa isn't properly reflecting, or rather, her lust can plainly be seen so I punish her by poking her forhead 3 times in a row.
Seems that it still hurts even though I held back, she's holding on her forehead while rolling around on the floor. This might be a good medicine once in a while.

# 4-10. The Night Before Departure

*

Satou's here. I like both lawful shops and shops in gray-zone.
But I'll pass on compensated dating, Satou's.

◇

I take Arisa to the wagon. On the way there, I meet Martha-chan in the tavern, but she doesn't look particularly shy and offers me a meal.
Since I intend to eat outside with Liza and the girls, I decline.

When we got to courtyard where the wagon is, the 4 girls are waiting while looking bored.
When Liza notices me coming, she comes as the representative.

"Master, is it fine to put the luggage on board?"
"Let's see... Tomorrow, since we'll be picking more luggage from the merchant guild, let's do that tomorrow, but if we leave them here we'll be troubling the landlady huh."

Arisa whispers to me when I'm still thinking about it.

"Let's keep them in my Item Box? Don't you think that it's safer there?"
"There are only people we know now, so it's fine I guess."

I instruct the girls to pile the luggage inside the wagon for now.
The three small girls get up to the wagon to receive the luggage. Since Pochi and Tama have strength stat on par with two large adults, they handle the heavy preserved foods lightly. It looks as if this is some kind of magic show.

Arisa and Lulu are sorting the goods inside.
Needless to say, I and Liza are in charge of uploading the luggage. Since it's wasteful to wear expensive clothes for heavy duty job, I change into ordinary clothes. It's a simple linen tunic.

When we've finished loading the luggage, I made the girls beside Arisa to fetch water for 3 small barrels. One small barrel can hold 6 liter of water.

"You don't really need to exclude Lulu. I've talked about my Item Box with Lulu, you know?"

I'm afraid that someone would pick a fight with the beastkin girls if it's just them, so I ask Lulu to go with them.

"For now, let's split the preserved foods in half for each to keep, I'll carry the magic tools. Probably no one would steal the learning cards so put it on the wagon, and let's leave the foods that were entrusted to Liza and the girls alone."

"Kaay~", Arisa lightly said while storing the preserved foods into her Item Box. I also store the same amount.

The preserved foods are jerkies, baked black breads, fried beans and dried sweet potatoes.
Others that are in the bag are wheat flours, root crops, rock salts, and various other groceries. Since leaves vegetables are likely to give stomachache, it seems that they didn't buy it.

I've only noticed after doing this but...

"I'd love baskets or boxes to sort things out."
"Yeah true, I also want some cushioning materials. If we leave this alone, the cookwares will be noisy when the wagon shakes."
"I want thin ropes too."

"Ropes? Ah, for airing clothes huh."

"I think that having sturdy ropes is good."

Liza who just came back from getting water suggested.
I can't imagine what it would be used for.

"It's for draining blood from preys during the journey."

Right, we need ropes to tie thieves who may appear.

"You're such a philanthropist~ Thieves are thoroughly good-for-nothings and only bring harm, it's better to snatch away treasures from their hideout and annihilate them afterward. Even that famous thief-hunter girl said so you know~?"

What kind of acquaintance is she?
So there's a person who's famous for that, what a dangerous world.

"Are we not short on anything else?"

Pochi raises her hand while standing on her tiptoes. Did Arisa taught her that?

"Yes, Pochi-kun. Say it."
"A stool! I want one no desu~"

When I ask in detail, she seems to have used a stool when she helped taking care of the horse. She's brimming with enthusiasm to take care of the horses during the journey too. She's really reliable.

Tama also raises her hand in the same manner and says, "Brush~?". She tilts her body in troubling manner while raising her hand, cute. It seems that she wants a tool to brush the horse and clean their hoofs.

Tools for taking care of the horses, I completely forget about them.

Lulu also timidly raises her hand.

"....U, umm.", Her face turn bright red just by saying that.
I wonder if it's something that embarrassing? I glance at Arisa... She winks back. Are you from Showa era!

"I, I want a washboard and a bucket."

Is that really embarrassing? I have them in the storage so I've forgotten about it, but it's certainly necessary.

"If it's really possible, I want a mirror! I'm fine with hand-mirror size."
"Arisa, you're too extravagant."

Liza firmly gives a warning to Arisa. It's unusual for Liza to give an opinion before I decide.
I wonder if it's expensive in this world? That reminds me, I don't think I've seen any glassware. But, I'm sure there were mirrors from polished metals.

"I'd like to use one too, let's buy it if it's not too expensive."
"Yay."

Arisa looks unusually happy without acting. Lulu is also smiling. Liza doesn't have any objection since it's my decision. Pochi and Tama... don't seem like they understand.

It's decided that, tomorrow when I'm going to take the commodities from the guild, the five will buy the things we've just discussed.

After changing clothes, we go out to eat together.
That day, we eat dinner at stalls not far away from the gate inn. Since

we've been eating meats everyday, I order light soups, and soy bean breads.
Since Pochi and Tama look so sad while we're eating, I order meat skewers for four portions. It's Liza who looks the happiest somehow... but it's okay as long as they're happy.

◇

Since I meet Yosagu-san who just come back from work on the way to the inn, we decide to advance the plan to go out during the night a day forward.
Arisa is saying, "Even though you have me, you adulterer~", but I make Liza to carry her like a luggage back to the inn.

"Is that okay?"
"It's fine, she's just something like a little sister. The person herself thinks that she's a guardian though."

The east district is crowded just like yesterday.
Yosagu-san, who's chewing a bought skewer from stalls, is greeting girls who are gathering under the outside light, while we press forward to the crowds.

When I ask if they're his acquaintances, he says, "They're courtesans."
They usually work as waitress and courtesan in the inn at the same time, but during the slave auction they seem to look for customers outside.

Confirming from AR, a lot of them have [Sex Technique] skills.
...However, I'm anxious to see that a lot of them have various venereal diseases on the abnormal condition tab. Mostly are in [Incubation], but nearly 60% of them are suffering from it.
I wonder if it can't be healed with magic?

We enter red light district and walk for a while. Metal plates of magical light are hung on the shops, illuminating them with cheap-looking light. Most brothels are two story buildings with verandas on the second floor. Courtesans who wear expensive clothes with high exposures are lining up on the verandas trying to lure guests.

When I look, they raise their skirts and show their bare legs then throw kisses. It's a feature every shop has, interesting.
The people who have [Sex Technique] increase, and proportionally the people who have Venereal Disease[Incubation] decrease for about 30%. As expected there is no one who has Venereal Disease [Diseased].

"Young master, here's the shop. Let's enter quickly."

Yosagu-san pulls me to the shop. This shop seems to be refined, there is no girls attracting guests on the veranda.

When I enter, verandas are installed on the second floor high along the corridor. I lightly wave at the girl who I saw from outside there.

The floor is made from bare wood, but it's well polished. Is it about 30 tatami wide? There are a stove, doors and a stair to the second floor inside. There are 4 rooms shielded with cloths on the left and right.

"Welcome to the Seryuu Branch of Captivating Mansion."

A woman in later half of her 40 come out from the back door while greeting us with penetrating voice. The woman is wearing a pink dress with excessive frills, but her fat is too self-asserting, her clothes looks like it'll burst apart at the seams.

Guided by the woman, we go to one of the partitioned room.
It seems that this is a room for guests to wait for the girls, since it'd be

awkward to meet acquaintances in a brothel. The obese shopkeeper sure knows her stuff.

There are a sofa and three low quality marble tables inside the room. A girl of around 10 years old is standing by as a parlor maid.

"Excuse me.", the girl puts small green sake cup in front of me and Yosagu-san. Transparent liquids are inside of them. It's a distilled liquor from the smell.

According to the AR, the cups are made from jade. The liquor inside the cup is Shiga sake. It's a strong liquor with 50% alcohol content made from wheat.

"Ku~ delicious!", Yosagu-san gulp the liquor in high spirit.
It seems that he forgot to drink this sake when he went to this shop before.

The girl, is pouring the sake huh?
I sip it once as a social act. It certainly tastes good. It's like whiskey but transparent instead of amber-colored, I wonder if the processing is different?

Before Yosagu-san had his third cup, the shopkeeper comes back with 5 girls.

The first is the most beautiful girl with blond hair and blue eyes. With a small face, thin eyebrows, and strong-willed looking big pupils. Sticky-looking lips. Two large breasts that look like they would spill from the open chest clothes. Most likely, she's the most popular girl in this shop. She's 18 years old.

The second and the third are twins. They're beautiful girls with black hairs and black eyes. Their most notable looks are their western, or

rather, French style. One of them has smaller breast than the other, but it's still around C cup. It seems that there a lot of people who spend the night with the two of them together. Of course, the fee will be for two people. They're 16 years old.

The fourth is a woman with droopy eyes. With dull blond hair and reddish brown pupils. Her eyebrows are thick, she's a gentle healing woman. Her breast is the biggest. It seems that there are a lot of repeaters for her. Her voice sounds mellow, it's comforting to hear. She's 21 years old, the oldest in this shop.

The fifth is a girl with red hair and reddish brown pupils. She's pales in comparison with the other girls but she has the nicest expression. She feels lively or rather, fascinatingly wholesomely erotic. Her breast size is average, but still around D cup. For me it's quite enough to be categorized as big breasts. 20 years old. She's the only person in this shop who doesn't has sex techniqu skill.

Every girls are wearing thin one-piece sticking to their skins looking erotic. The chest and abdomen area are transparent, I cannot help but utter GJ.

"Which girl will you choose?", the shopkeeper asked. Yosagu-san asked with his eyes, "Please don't hesitate to choose your favorite girl.", I said and he really did choose the most beautiful girl without hesitation.
I also aim her, but I'll yield here.
Yosagu-san drinks down the liquor left in the cup in one gulp, and leave the room with that girl. It seems that the second floor is for the guests to enjoy themselves.

I was at loss for a bit, but I chose the fifth girl in the end.
The guest room only has a simple bed, but it's clean and smells good so I have no complaint.

When we entered the room, the girl hurriedly took off her clothes and flaunted her body. I enjoy the feel of OPPAI liberated from the clothes, enjoying scooping them with my hands.
It's exactly the festival of OPPAI. Who was it who says that OPPAI contains man's dream?

I hug her waist and we fall down to the bed. It's a mature woman's body after a long time, so I'm taking my time to carefully enjoy it ...in various ways.

Though since the girl's reaction was good, I unintentionally gave too much service. Like this, I'm not sure who desire whom.
We enjoy ourselves until midnight. She faints from too much pleasure in the middle, so I stop.

>[Sex Technique Skill Acquired]
>[Lover's Talk Skill Acquired]
>[Seduction Skill Acquired]

Apparently this body has too much stamina, the partner couldn't catch up. I use her breasts that I've enjoyed plentifully as pillows and depart to the world of dream.

# 4-11. Departure (1)

*

Satou's here. I love to make programs without being limited. The last time I did that was when I made a legged robot for my graduate research during college. When I became a working adult, I haven't done it.
This time, it seems that I'll make magic tools.

◇

Yep, it's a good morning.
I walk the town while enjoying the morning sunlight, feeling refreshed.

Yosagu-san was unlike me, yawned constantly looking sleepy. I invited him for breakfast but since he didn't come home his family was probably mad so we decided to part ways outside the shop.
"If I made it big in the labyrinth city, let's come again.", I shouted him that.

Even though it's early in the morning, the people who are having meals on the stalls, and the people who are selling fresh groceries are lively.
The vulgar atmosphere that usually permeates in the east district was probably the fault of the visitors.

I'm smelling something good from the stalls.
Although I'm not particularly hungry, let's buy some souvenirs for the girls. Though I can't buy sushi in wooden box pack like those fathers from Showa era.

I buy a big handbasket made from thin wood from a street stall. It's about as big as two rice bowl. I also bought two lidded containers for soup and

put it inside the basket.

I buy warm meals and put it into the Storage through the basket. I keep buying various things to the extent that it doesn't look unnatural.
Soup made from meatless animal bone and vegetables. Thick stew with vegetables and dried meat. Various grilled meats starting from grilled goat meats. Seryu grills. Freshly baked flat breads. Steamed potatoes. There are some scratched fruits from many fruits I've bought.

I've bought for about 30 servings. It's too much for souvenirs but I'll keep some for emergency. With these much, even if we are in an environment impossible to light fire, I could still provide warm meals. In the first place, I plan to use the Storage so that we don't end up in desperate situation.

I wanted to buy alchemy materials, but it was closed at the time.

◇

When I get back to the gate inn, Arisa who saw me from the window comes running down.
After she looked at my face, she begins to stomp the ground with her foot.

"Uuu~~~~. Mou! That glossy face~~."

She bites the edge of a handkerchief, taking a pose. Every single one of her gestures are old... let's not ask her age before she was reincarnated.

"I was the one who was supposed to take your first time~~"

I don't remember making such promise.
I keep silent about it since it'd be bad if I don't.

"You're fussy, and this isn't my first time anyway."
"Nooo, even though it was one in a millennium chance to snatch away the DT of a boy...."
[TLNote: DT, Doutei, Virgin. :p ]

My condolences.
I call for Lulu, and we gather in front of the wagon. The breakfast are potatoes and meat skewers that I've just bought.

I talk to Arisa in whisper to check on Lulu's condition. If she still hasn't recovered, I'll postpone our departure for two days.
According to Arisa, it was only serious in the first day, it's fine now.
Since it looks painful, let's give her the painkiller I made from practices.
There are five of it, those should be enough.

After we finished our simple meal, I advance as planned yesterday.

◇

I ride the wagon until the parking space of the Commercial Guild. Horses were easier to fine-drive unlike cars so it was easy.
It's lively here too in the morning. Every carriages which occupy half of the parking lot are unloading their cargo. Every carriages look well seasoned. The ratio for luggage carriages and covered wagon is fifty-fifty.
The carts are loaded with a lot of 10 kilogram bags. The people who are moving the bags look like ruffians who wear villager-like simple long-sleeved shirt and trousers. I can see patchworks on its knee and elbow.
While I look at other carriages out of curiosity, Sunifun-san who has finished confirming the load and assessing the prices comes here.

"Good morning, Satou-sama. You came really early."
"I'm sorry. Am I troubling you by coming too early?"

I don't think that what I'm doing is that bad, but let's apologize for now.

"Not at all. The god of business surely like people who are quick."

Even though Sunifun-san said that, if I look at the surrounding, it's probably customary to bring in the goods in the morning and bring it out in the afternoon.

I am guided to the warehouse. The goods that I've ordered yesterday are put on one of the section. I confirm the products and their number with the help of an employee. I check the contents of every barrel of the Dragon White Stone and close the lid.
Sunifun-san watches over me doing that like a grandfather watching over his grandson. Hey, you're not that old right.
I ask the employee to carry the goods to my wagon, while I complete the payment for the transaction at the office.

When I get back to the wagon, the loading is complete so I visually check on the goods. Since I've put tags on the Dragon White Stones, it doesn't seem like it has been swapped. It can't see through if the inside of the barrels are swapped, but they probably wouldn't have enough time to go that far.
I thank the employee and give him one big copper coin.

"May you have good businesses!", Sunifun-san left the words as farewell as I left the guild.

◇

"Welcome nano desu~."

I'm greeted by Pochi when I return to the gate inn. She hugs me as I go down the coach seat, so I rub her head. I separate from her as I pat her head, and I work to unfasten the horses from the wagon.

"I'll help no desu.", she immediately stands on the stoll that we've just bought and begins to help. Might as well teach her the way to unfasten the belt, manage the yoke, etc. It's also good to review myself as I teach others.

"What's everyone else are doing?"
"Lulu is washing over there. Others are shopping no desu~."
"So Pochi and Lulu are house sitting huh?"
"I'm watching the luggages no desu~"

Pochi said it pridefully. She's certainly qualified for it. I can somehow imagine Tama sleeping on top of the luggages.

I ask Pochi to take care of the horses in the stables. Meanwhile, I put the goods I brought from the commercial guild into the Storage.
I thought of leaving the goat leathers and wools outside, but the smell was severe so I stow it away. Let's practice to make deodorant next time.

Pochi carried the luggage until it loaded. Pochi says, "Watching the luggage no desu." from the wagon. Since she's doing her best, I'll go to see Lulu's condition. Since the laundries that Lulu is doing are underwear, I go back without calling her.

◇

After that, I ask Pochi for house sitting, and take a cab to the plaza before the castle. The flower bed on the center are still being worked on but the pavements are already beautifully set with the paving stones. They sure

work fast. They might have used magic since this is fantasy.

The wall on the magic shop are still being repaired, but it seems that it's open for business for once.

"...then... catalyst... scales. If you get your hand on these, I'd like you to deliver it to the magic corps station."
"I'll see to ask my magicians and alchemist friends. At most, I could get my hands on 1-2 pieces of scales."

As I enter the store, a magician-looking old woman and old man come out while having those conversations.
The old man take a glance at me but leave without saying anything.

"Oh, a visitor eh? I'm sorry but I don't deal on love potion or energy drink. Go to the alchemy store in the east district."

It's a thin and dried up old woman. Wearing clothes appropriate for a magician. Deep blue robes with long sleeves, wide-opening tall hat unwieldy for indoor, wearing numerous ring with suspicious design on her fingers, and with about a 5 cm big emerald pendant designed after skull on her neck.

"No, I want to buy magic books."

She raised just an eyebrow in surprise after hearing my words. She put lean the cane which was on her hand to the wall and take out a litograph from under the counter.
Yamato stone again?

"We don't sell magic books to a man without talent okay? Recently there are a lot of scoundrels of nobles who buy magic books just for prestiges, soiling them. I'll sell the books only to people having certain amount of magic measured from this instrument."

...Dang, I should've brought Arisa along.
I don't know how far this stone can measures, but it'd be bad if my enormous magic power is known.

"I'm sorry, I'm afraid that it'll break if I carelessly touch it."
"Fuhn, excuse huh? If you put magic power on this, it will emit blue light. It's cheap compared to the instrument in royal capital, but that's exactly why it's robust. So that it won't break if a veteran do his best, magic power stops flowing after it feed on the required amount. If one has a capability of a full-fledged magician then it will shine blue. Other than that it'll stay red as it is."

Is it safe?  If it's as the old woman said that there's no problem but if the punchline is, "Actually it can read the exact value.", that's scary.

"If you don't want to try then go home. I have a business to get Dragon Powder from my alchemist friend after this."

The powder that the old man mentioned earlier is Dragon Powder huh. When I thought that it's a familiar name, I remember that I obtained some in the labyrinth.
Would she be willing to trade magic books for this?

"Shopkeeper-san, If it's dragon powder then I have it, if you're fine with I can give it to you?"

I take out 5 vial of Dragon Powder from the bag. I got 6 from the labyrinth, but I decide to keep one in hand.
When I take it out I estimate the market price... 20 gold coins huh?

"Are those real?"

The old woman picks one vial and takes out one earpick worth of powder,

then she tests it with some reagents and apparatuses.

"I'll buy it for 10 gold coins a vial."

What a greedy old woman.
When I say that the market price is 20 gold coins, she says, "That's the price on a shop", rejecting it.
Since I don't intend to force the sales and the aggrement doesn't seem to be achievable, I'm about to leave the shop, but her hands hold out at the speed that doesn't match her age. Her eyes are fiery and glittering, she's a bit scary.

"W, wait!  That thunder old man is probably going to buy them at that price, I'll buy it at 20 gold coins a piece. But I'll pay at the end of the month as the condition. Since the payment from officials is slow."
"I'm sorry but I intend to leave the city tomorrow, so I can't accept that condition."

The negotiation continue until lunch time, and in the end, it's decided that the payment is in the form of magic books. Because magic books higher than intermediate level aren't allowed to be sold to people who aren't a citizens of Seryuu city, I'm having a hard time choosing books that worth 100 gold coins.

First, I'll collect lower-class magic books from every elements. Still it's only 40 gold coins, so I buy thesis and investigation, and various miscellaneous notes for reading materials. It's 60 gold coins up to this. Then I buy canes and amulets. It seems that only those who have permit from the city are allowed to sell magic scroll, so I can't buy it here.

Furthermore, I buy cheap catalysts for making potion. It seems that they're made from magic cores from lower class monsters.

"Oh, your main job is an alchemist eh. Then, how about these books?"

The old woman takes out two magic books from the back of the store written with, "Magic Catalyst and the Material", "Seeds and Catalysts". I'm a bit worried with those titles, but since the author is named Jahad, I buy it. It's the maker of the spinning disk magic tool if I'm not mistaken. I buy 5 other books written by this guy.

"15 gold coins remaining is it. What else do you wish?  I don't have good magic tools left. At best, I have a tool that emit light, or a tool that heat up if you put it above."

Oioi, you're putting out good things in the end.
When I receive them, the first is a crystal ball about as big as a candy ball and the other is something black that looks like a pot stand with 20cm diameter. It's about 3 cm thick and feel like it's made from porcelain. On one side, a copper line is drawn on top of a concentric circle.s

The crystal ball-- Light Drop begin emitting light after I pour it magic power. Seems that it shines for 30 minutes every time it's poured with magic power. The pot stand-- Light Hot Plate is also the same, by putting magic power on the copper line, it gives warmth for 10 minutes. However, since it only emit heat enough to scald a person yet not enough to boil water, it's not suitable for cooking. That should be usable to warm tea or stew though.

The Light Drop is one gold coin each, while the Light Hot Plate is 3 gold coin. Since the Light Drop is in stock of two, I buy both.

In the end, since I couldn't find good stuffs for the remaining 10 gold coins, it's exchanged in cash. I thought that I have to use it all up but that's not good. Dangerous, dangerous.

"Fuhn, putting money aside, it's been a long time since someone bought this much."

"Thank you very much, I was able to buy many nice things."

Thanking the old woman, I ask to deposit the stuffs I've bought in the store for a while. After this, I've completely forgotten to buy map from the bookstore next door.
The old woman kindly agree to keep the stuffs, then I go toward the bookstore.

# 4-12. Departure (2)

*

Satou's here. I'm not a person who often take trips, but I've strangely grown attached to a city I've only been to for a few days.
I'm want to come again for notable tourist attractions.

◇

The bookstore is kept by the already recovered gray haired old man, Semone-san isn't in the shop. I'm not able to worship that glorious proportion... regrettable.

The shopkeeper give me the map to labyrinth city.
How do I say this, it's a map that screams, "Measurement? What's that is it tasty?". Although I didn't expect it to have map symbols or contours, but it's questionable if this thing has concept of cardinal directions.
Probably it's shown on my face, the old man explains. Accurate maps are classified informations so only people from the kingdom's side could get a hold on it. I miss Google Map.

Since it's better than nothing, I buy 5 maps until it reach the Labyrinth city. Later on, I learn that merchant guild sells better maps.

My business is over with this, but the shopkeeper, demonstrating his commercial spirit and kindness, recommends me various books.
Books that looks like it'll be useful for journeys like, "Journey to Royal Capital", "Dictionary of Herbs", "Carriage Repair Reverse Dictionary", etc, I'm charmed by their titles so I buy all the recommended ones.

There are introductory books for woodworking, smithing, engraving and various manufacture-related books, but since there's no demand and

coupled that they're old books, they don't sell well at all.
When I show an interest to it, the shopkeeper begin to pile one book after another. Since they could be bought for 2 gold coins for everything, I decide to buy them all.

Furthermore, he also recommends good reading books for breaks during a journey. Although most of them are about love or heroes, but I find exceptions like, "Ancient Battlefield and Withered Labyrinth", "Mad Magician and Death Army", "Man who Created Labyrinths". I buy the three of them and 5 popular picture books.
Picture books are good for learning letters.

It was a bit over the budget, so I drive it down to 10 gold coins.

◇

I bought too much indeed. The bag with almost 30 books inside is quite heavy. If I didn't have the status compensation, my waist would have gone bad.
It becomes quite the amount after I receive the stuffs I've bought from the magic shop. Though it's not like I could not walk back carrying them, I'll look way to conspicious so I wait for a cab carriage.

"Hello, nimble Onii-san."

I turn toward the voice behind.
With a face as if saying that the prank is successful, it's Zena-san's coworker girl friend (Lilio).

"Hello, Lilio-san. Did you imitate Zena-san?"
"Ehehe~ Did I pass? Hey hey, did you skip a beat?"

I somehow understand that I mustn't let Lilio meet Arisa.

"I noticed immediately because your voice is different."
"Eh~ Too bad~ but, but, isn't that love? The power of love?"

Girls really do like love talks huh.
Lilio is coming closer to impose her small body. I have enough loli girls, so push her shoulder back so our body doesn't stick together.

"Are you alone today?"
"Yep, the other soldiers are sleeping~ But Zena, from yesterday noon until midnight today, is keeping on guard the who~le time. Magic troops are lacking in number isn't it."

I wanted to say some parting words to Zena-san before I leave for the journey but...

Alright, let's change the departure to tomorrow morning.

"Lilio-san, could you deliver a message for Zena-san?"
"Okay~ But no passionate lines that would make chest hot okay? If it's too intense, it might be interpreted wrong you know~."

While crossing her arms, Lilio talks with a bad face.
I ask her to tell Zena that I'll be leaving early tomorrow morning. Lilio willingly agree to deliver the message.

"Acha~ Zena's first love end up unrequited huh~." , It seems that she intended it to be a monologues, but I heard it loud and clear.

I don't reply to that and go back to the gate inn wth a cab carriage.

◇

On the carriage, I store the books inside the Item Box. When Arisa knew about me going to the bookstore, "Didn't I say to take me along~", she's angry, but after I tell her that I bought every elemental beginner magic books, her smile returns.
Besides, you probably haven't learned how to learn Shiga kingdom letters right?

"Then, are we going to depart?"

Since Arisa asked, I tell everyone that we'll depart tomorrow morning.

"I'm going to the alchemist shop on the east district and the general guild to finish some business, so check if there's anything that we forgot to buy. It's fine to play learning card when it's over."

"Card!", "Nano desu!", Pochi, Tama and Lulu rejoice. It's rare to see the figure of Lulu who looks happy like a normal girl, I click on REC button in my heart.

"Empty dummy barrels are too light it'll seem unnatural, so I think it's good to store long-lasting potatoes in them."
"It's going to be winter soon, it might be too cold to sleep with just the mantle. I think it's good to purchase a blanket for master at least."

I agree with Arisa and Liza's opinions and allow them to buy those. Of course the blankets are for four people. Since Arisa saw some made from cottons in the marketplace, I permitted her to buy after hearing the price.

◇

I go to the alchemy shop alone, and buy a lot of painkiller and deodorant materials and recipe compilations. It's an extravagance worry, but when you're shopping without caring for the remaining money, maybe because there's no fun of hesitating, it's a bit lonely.

On the general guild, I listen for the progress of the request I asked from Nadi-san. Even though it has only been a day, it's already mostly complete. The rest weren't in home so she's going to go back tomorrow.
Nadi-san passes me something as I give her the reward. What she gave is a big basket filled with things like small bag with money, vegetables, sandals and various other.
Poor home gives vegetables or home industry product like sandals instead of money, even things like wood spoons and others. It seems that Nadi-san did say that rewards are unnecessary but she was given them before she could decline.
I tell her that I'm leaving Seryuu city tomorrow and I present her the rewards as a bonus.

"Satou-san, your next destination must be either royal capital or duke-sama capital right?"
"No, I intend to go to the labyrinth city."
"There are a lot of demi-human in labyrinth city, life will be easy there."

Come to think of it, I haven't meet the most famous demi-human, the elves. I thought that Seryuu city should have them.

"That's right, I'd like to see the elves the most."

Nadi-san is showing a subtle expression hearing my reply.
She looks at the back and calls the manager. It's the old man who were always sleeping.

"Manager~ please come here for a bit."

The manager comes here while stroking his beard. He's much younger than I thought. He's a bit small and skinny, but he's a handsome man with a matching greenish black long hair.
The manager who got here doesn't say anyhing, Nadi-san lifts one side of his hair up. They're quite familiar.

Lookie lookie, she points her finger.
The manager's ear, the tip is a bit sharp. Is he demi-human too?

"Satou-san's reaction is too light."
"I'm sorry, what's wrong with manager-san's ear?"」

Nadi-san is mad after hearing my answer.

"Mou~ What are you saying, I'm showing you the proof since you said that you want to see an elf."
"Eh? He's an elf?  I thought that elves' ears are longer though?"

Is he a half-elf?
The manager-san looks grumpy from my reply. He goes back to his position and resumes his nap.
Looks like I've offended him with my answer somehow.

"Mou~ manager! Just because you were mistaken with long-ears tribe (Booch), please don't immediately sulk!"
"What kind of tribe are long-ears tribe?  It's said that elves has ears this long from my hometown?"

I make a motion to express long ears with my finger.

"What Satou-san said is a tribe among ears tribe called long ears tribe (Booch). They're taller than normal people in average, and their hair is blond instead of green. They have talent in magic and live as long as the elves. The saga empire first emperor was an ears tribe and was a king of

the hero, so the tribe is considered to be sacred. They seldom ever goes out of Saga's empire, since they even have a sanctuary there, so they're rarely seen. However, they're hated by the elves and is called『False Elf』."

I see, let's not get it wrong next time.
I apologize to the manager for the rudeness. Since the manager answers by fluttering his hand while napping, I take that I'm forgiven.

◇

The next morning, we've finished having breakfast in the stalls. I have paid for the inn too.
Martha-chan said, "Stay here next time too~" as a carefree farewell, I leave the inn by driving the wagon.

[TLN: Operating? Or driving? Are you driving horses? or riding but he's not exactly riding on the horse.]

I thought that Zena-san will come to see me off, but she had an all nighter, she's probably still asleep. Let's send her a letter next time.

When we're departing I inadvertently see a white dot moving along the inner wall.
I greet the knight Soun at the gate entrance and leave the city. I'm troubling people if I wait here.

When I got a bit away from the gate, I hear, "Wait~", from behind.
Since I'd be a hindrance for the traffic here I go to an open space outside the gate and stop the wagon.

The traffice at the gate looks to be in disorder when I look at it. One horse is slipping out from there. I wave my hands from the top of the wagon.

"Satou-san!"

Zena-san is coming here on a horse while smoothing her hair which got disheveled by the wind. She's wearing a dress unsuitable for riding a horse. She wears different cosmetic than the usual.

"I'm glad that I made it!"
"Zena-san, I'm also glad that I got to meet you before I leave."

It's good that I don't end up being ungrateful.

"You're going to the labyrinth city right? Please send me a letter when you've settled down. I will absolutely reply back!"
"Yes, I will wihout fail."

I thought that she'd say that she wants to go together, but I'm glad that it's about letters.
"Pinky swear~", Arisa shows her smirking face from the wagon while saying unnecessary words.

Zena-san bites it and vigorously asks for "I want to pinky swear!", I couldn't refuse and we pinky swear.
Doing it at this age, I'm a bit embarrassed.

I'll properly say farewell to Zena-san who stares at her bend little finger ecstatically.

"Then, let's meet again some other time! I will send you a letter for certain after I arrive at the labyrinth city."
"Yes! I'm looking forward to the day I'm be able to see you again."

It's good that it didn't become a sad farewell.
My reunion with her will happen faster than I thought, but I still don't know at this time.

Zena-san earnestly waves her hand until the knight Soun grabs her by the nape to the station.

# Intermission: A Certain Master and His Vassal's Conversation

*

"--As has been said, with the cooperation of all temples and magicians, the labyrinth won't expand toward the city, and as long as the ceremony is maintained, the barrier will last. In the future, for the sake of reinforce the barrier, we'll build several holy monuments in the eastern district. Please sign these documents for securing those sites."

The white-haired official-- consul of the earl, Ortes, read the report while adjusting his monocle.

"Then, is it usable? That labyrinth?!"

A man bend his body forward on the desk while having a joyful look-- the earl of Seryuu.
Can the labyrinth be commercialized? He asked.

"The three great temple, Parion, Garleon and Tenion have conducted ceremonies to determine it and the result are『ġēse』, 『ġīse』, and 『ġēse』. They're relatively favorable."

The consul stop there, and add, "However."

"Our experts have pointed out several problems."

"The first one must be about the entrance which is inside the city."
"That's exactly right. Other labyrinths have shown that monsters could overflow from it after some years. Therefore, it is necessary to have something to have blockades in case it happens."

"Additional walls outside the barrier huh... quite a lot of expense. Since

we already have the quarry from 3 years ago, we only need the workers huh."
"Yes, and we have just secured women and men slaves who looks able from slave dealers."

The earl becomes dubious after hearing the consul.

"Do we need to buy slaves for this? Don't we have enough labor already?"
"The people have become agitated, we'll use the slaves until temporary walls are complete. After we have finished using them we could just put them in the mine. Or we could make the obedient ones to be soldiers."

The earl considers the prior investment before deciding. When the labyrinth is able to steadily supply magic cores, the economy of earldom will most likely quickly grow.

"Have you blocked the entrance for the time being?"
"Our experts said that it's dangerous to completely block it."
"The reason?"
"It could ruin a country they said."
"You mean『The Nightmare of Ishtan』? I thought it was just a myth, did it actually happen?"

There was a country called Ishtan 200 years ago. The country suffered significant damage from monsters that emerged from a labyrinth. The king who was worried with that invited a famous magician to seal off the entrance of the labyrinth. For safely closing the labyrinth and made the monsters threat disappear, the king was hailed as the wise king. However, 10 years later, the seal was broken by tsunami of monsters which overflowed from it and destroyed the entire country in a day.

"Wasn't Ishtan safe for 10 years? Then it should be alright to close it off for a bit while right?"
"Yes, we can't guarantee it but it's most likely fine."

"Alright, then close the labyrinth's entrance after the inner walls' construction is finished."
"I will arrange it at once. Please sign this document."

The consul presents the document which he has prepared it beforehand. The earl signs while reading it and continues to talk with the consul.

"There's another problem in regard with the labyrinth."
"What is it?"
"The Dungeon Master was the senior demon who had attacked this castle some times ago."

The earl breaks his intense expression, and ask the consul expressionless.

"Is that definitive?"
"Yes, a magic soldier who participated with the castle's defense was on the spot. Furthermore, the assistant priest of Garleon, Nebinen, testified for the power of the demon."
"Fumu, we don't know the demon's goal but we've obtained the answers from the oracle. It can't be helped if we're anxious."

The consul furrows his brow a bit, but regains his composure.

"We're obliged to tell the king about the labyrinth, how will you choose the representatives?"
"Yeah, if I'm not mistaken one of the survivor of the labyrinth is a noble."
"It's viscount Belton."
"Then let's make Belton with several officials to be ones."
"I understand. I'll send a messenger to inform Viscount Belton."

The consul summons his subordinate and tell him to prepare the letter for the Viscount while adjusting his monocle.
The report itself has actually been sent to the kingdom with the magic mirror. But it's considered proper for a noble to be the messenger for

reporting directly to the king.

"Were those all the things about the labyrinth?"

The earl is confirming while stroking his goatee which doesn't really suit him.

"No, I was wondering if we could send inspection teams to the labyrinth city, Selbira."
"Learning from the pioneer huh. How many do you suppose we should send?"
"Four groups consisting of two military units groups, a merchants group and a general citizens group would be good. Let's make them bring back the know-how about the public order problem, tax, and structure of explorer guild. If possible, I'd like them to invite some high ranking explorers to investigate our labyrinth's rank."
"General citizen? Is there any meaning in sending commoners?"

The earl asks dubiously.

"It's my bad for calling them general citizens. I mean to say 'people who are knowledgeable about the streets.'"

The earl who seemingly agree with the consul's answer exaggeratedly gives permission.

"Excellent, I'll leave personnels' selection to you. Tell me when you have your candidates."
"I respectfully accept it."

◇

"Were you able to grasp the identity of the silver masked hero?"

The public call him hero, but no one know his identity. Since the earl cannot overlook an existence that could equal senior demon hiding in this city, he did not only make his formal investigators but also the consul's spy to investigate.

"We have succeeded in narrowing down the candidates, but we're lacking conclusive evidence."
"Who and who?"

"The first candidate is Sir Kigori from the knight. He has body reinforcement magic and herculean-strength skill. He was off duty so he stayed at home during that day. There are many other things that match like his long blond hair, but he should has been boasting more if he was really the silver mask."
"Right, he's a narcissistic man isn't he?"

"The second candidate is Yasaku-shi the explorer. He's a level 45 warrior. He's not only high-leveled but also equipped with various strong magic tools, so he could possibly endure the demon's attacks. He's accustomed with fighting monsters and demons. However, his hair is black."
"What is such man doing in this kind of frontier place?"
"Your excellency, please stop belittling your own territory."

The earl is laughing while expressing his gratitude.

"His aim is probably dragon scales from the Dragon's Valley."
"Is he suicidal?"
"No, what I said isn''t exactly right, he's probably aiming for dragons which are nesting away from the dragon's valley. As one would expect, he couldn't possibly come back alive if he goes to the Dragon's Valley."
"Yeah, it'd be over just by the scales tribe before he could even meet the dragon."

The consul clears his throat and goes back to the discussion.

"The conversation had wandered off. The third candidate is Yasaku-shi's companion, the magic swordsman, Tan-shi. His level is high at 42, and he's probably used with dealing with demon like Yasaku-shi. He's a blond, but he can't possibly fought the senior demon while being only able to use body reinforcing magic."
"Right, it's not like the opponent is unaffected by magic."
"Moreover, explorers usually fight in party."

After being lost in thought for a while,

"I see, certainly we're lacking the decisive evidence to ascertain who the silver mask is."
"Yes."

"Is there no other candidate?"
"It's not like there isn't, but beside the three above, it's impossible judging by their ability..."
"They might be hiding their true ability you know?"

The earl is grinning.

"There are four people who were omitted from candidacy. The first one is the Earl predecessor's bastard child, Ratts-dono. He was present in both uproars. His hair and height match the condition. He also has the need to hide his true ability and identity. That said, someone like him probably remained as a spectator until the end."
"That's right, brother-in-law is that kind of guy."

The villainous face of his brother-in-law floats in the earl's mind. It looks like a villain compared to the real person, probably because of the long discord between them.

He's not related with the silver mask, but since he was present during both the incident with the demon, the earl orders the consul to keep an eye on him.

"The second one is the alchemist, Akabana-dono. He wore the same robe as the silver mask, he even had the silver mask in his house. He was present at the day of the uproar, showing his face on the relief station."
"Hou? That's suspicious."

The consul shakes his head at the earl's words.

"However, silver mask isn't an uncommon thing. Because it's used during harvest festival to ward off demon, there are probably more than 10 shops which sell it."
"Fumu, was it a man who was fighting?"
"No, the figure was slim and the skin was abnormally pale that it didn't match the strength the silver mask was showing. A friend of mine testified that."
"Maybe he drank medicine that could change his body?"
"The elder confirm the existence of such medicine but the feedback reaction is too strong that it's suicidal for healthy person to drink it."
"Is that so."

Even if it's possible, if the medicine makes your body handicapped then there would be no meaning in fighting. The earl thinks so and moves his interest to the next candidate.

"The third one is a man called Usu who's affiliated with a criminal guild called Brown Rat."
"It's a guy who's a polar opposite of a hero."
"This man had similar physique and hair and he was confirmed to be present during both uproars. Moreover, the one who was carrying the demon's arm during the rebellion uproar was this guy."
"Hou? Did he cut the demon's arm and got possessed by it?"

"The possibility exists."

The consul picks on thin document from the stack he's holding and gives it to the earl.

"A hypothesis has arrived from the elder. 'Wasn't the demon who possessed the man called Uusu different from the demon who attacked the castle?' He said."
"For two senior demons appeared at the same time, isn't that impossible?"
"Maybe they were demons who were in hiding in hope of creating a labyrinth, he said."

"And then they fought each other because one intruded another's territory is it?"
"It's written as such in the hypothesis."

"How much is the truth from what old man thunder said?"

The earl puts one hand on his chin while thinking.
If it was said by someone else then we would laugh at it together, but the elder that the consul refer-- the earl call him the old man thunder, is the leading magician in this territory and even in the kingdom he's among the five most powerful one. Even if what he said seemed absurd, it couldn't be ignored.

"Right then, since there's no evidence I can't say for sure, but if it's the truth then a lot of things would start to make sense."
"Like the abnormal endurance?"
"Yes. While fist fighting the demon, he received a concentrated attack from 30 magicians and came out unscathed. He couldn't be human."

It's possible with certain magic tool, but the earl and the consul have no idea about it.
The first three candidates who were mentioned cannot clear this

condition too, so they are exempted.

"If he's a demon, then that question is solved huh."
"The knight leader who was commanding also reported that, 『He was strong without no doubt, but his movement was like an amateur.』."
"A senior demon who isn't used to fighting huh..."
"Or maybe, it was confused with the difference of the possessed body compared with its real body...."

If the other demons are able to hide themselves, then the threat can't be ignored.
The earl thinks so and translates it into action.

"Alright, arrest all members of Brown Rat guild. Thoroughly investigate everything about this man called Uusu."
"I understand."

◇

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot with the last candidate."

The consul pulls a report from the document stack.

"He's called Satou, a self-proclaimed merchant."
"Self-proclaimed?"
"Yes, the person introduced himself as a merchant but no one in the merchant guild knew him, and he didn't have any business activity during his visit to Seryuu city."

The earl who had his interest piqued chimed in.

"Is he a spy from other country?"

"No, his performance was too poor to be a spy. The only things he did after arriving at this city was just sightseeing and doing tryst with women. He seemed to be well-off but he did nothing but wild merrymaking."
"Sightseeing? In this place... a city with scarce tourist attraction?"
"Yes, it's a good way to check on the city's facilities and road as a way to confirm the nation's power, but it's too conspicuous."
"That's right, I've never seen anyone who goes on a tour in this Seryuu city."

The consul continues his talk after clearing his throat.

"This person is like the three earlier, he was present during both uproars, and was a survivor from the labyrinth."
"Self-proclaimed merchant, but actually an explorer eh?"

The earl finds it quite amusing.

"Well, according to viscount Belton, 『He was excellent at commanding the demi-human slaves, but the actual person himself was mediocre. He's a coward who didn't equip a sword, couldn't use magic, and only stealthily threw stones from behind the demi-human slaves.』, he said."
"Is that guy acquainted with viscount Belton?"
"Rather than an acquaintance, he's the man who rescued viscount Belton when he was caught by monster."
"Hou, should we give him some kind of medal?"
"I think it's unnecessary since the viscount himself is giving him rewards..."

The earl nods while getting back to the story.

"Even without fighting strength, he was able to escape from the labyrinth. We should consider that he has some kind of experience."
"Isn't it just because the demi-human slaves were strong?"

"From the Yamato stone check, they're all level 13, around the level of an average knight."

The consul reports it plainly. His expression doesn't show if he discriminate against demi-human.

"All of his slaves? It's not just one slave who is at the same level as an average knight?"
"Yes, the three are."
"That's some battle potentials."
"Yes, since they're demi-human slaves they're not allowed to have weapons inside the city so there's no problem with the public order, but it's extraordinary for a self-proclaimed merchant's guards."

The earl is contemplating while the consul waits for his master.

"A son of a noble, or a wealthy merchant's son... No, can't be, someone like that would have humans as their guards. The prince of the lost kingdom..."
"I think you're jumping to conclusion for that one."
"You're right, it's fun to guess his identity but there's no meaning to it."
"Yes."
"Let's scout for people to be put into the inspection team for labyrinth city."
"Are you serious about that?"
"Write the candidates."

"I understand."

◇

"Still, the day after he arrived at Seryuu city, he was at the spot where the

demon attacked, moreover, the day after that, he was present during the rebellion, and again, he got dragged into the labyrinth. What an unlucky man."
"If that man is bringing in demons then we should expel him from this territory..."
"That can't be. Nebinen testified that he stopped the rebellion, found out the mastermind behind it and discerned the demon."

The earl raises his eyes after hearing the consul's report.

"He's quite an able man. If what Nebinen said isn't a lie..."
"It's not just Nebinen-dono, a magic soldier who was present also testified the same thing."

"Fumu, a mysterious man huh... I'm interested but I can't get free time to meet him."
"Yes, since you need to reorganize the territory army, rebuild the destroyed city, the isolation of the labyrinth and other things that keep piling."

The earl seemingly of doing mischief, grins while crooking his lips.

"About that medal earlier."
"Are you going to really give him one?"
"No, not medal, let's give him gentleman title."
"...court rank is it?"
[TLN: Not sure which rank is the earl is using, so this is going to be temporary although well...]

The consul is unusually shaken with the earl's world and his words is mixed with thorn.

"You don't mind right? It's a rank given to 10 people a year. We don't need to give him position or pension either. At most his privileges are being at the lowest seat of nobles and exempted of the tax."
"To give a person of unknown birth and parentage a rank, this vassal who

has served for generations object."

The earl has anticipated the consul's objection and solemnly states his excuse.

"He saved the oldest member of that vassal, viscount Belton's life, stopped the rebellion, and uncovered the plot of the demon. Aren't those enough for achievements?"
"There is no objection to his achievements but..."
"Furthermore, I'm not giving him viscount or baron rank but a false noble rank of gentleman."

The consul realizes that the earl isn't serious from his expression.

"Please stop joking. Right now is the important time for the earldom to make rapid progress."
"Sorry, forgive me. I was having fun imagining how my vassal would look like if I give a vagabond a court rank..."

Admonished by the consul, the earl apologizes.
Having finished letting off the steam with the joke, the earl and his consul move to their next agenda. Their night is long.

# Intermission: Friends of Yuni

*

I've made new friends today.

They're demi-human girls called Pochi-chan and Tama-chan.
All demi-humans that I've ever meet eyes were like stray cats ready to bare their fangs, they were scary. But those girls are different.

◇

My morning starts early, because I'd get scolded if I don't get to the gate inn before the dawn. When the sky begins to brighten, I leave the orphanage to the main street.
It's dim, but I'm not afraid. Because I'm with other children who are running toward their job's place.

I enter through the back door since the big gate for carriages is closed. The back door is also closed, but for the short me, I can just slip through the small gap.

I head to the staff door through the courtyard. The water is low when I peek at the water jugs. I must fill it before the landlady woke up!
I pick up a bucket and go to the well.

"Kuu~~~~~, heavy~~~~."

Hanging on my body weight, I pull the rope connected with the bucket. Drawing water is a hard labor. Especially for someone as light like me.
I wonder if the day will come when I can draw water effortlessly like Martha-san?

"Intruder~?"
"Suspicious person nano desu~."

I was surprised by voices from the dark and let go off the ropes.
Ah, even though I was about to succeed...

I turn toward where the voices came from.
From there 4 lights are floating out together with carefree voices!

"Kyaa-----!"
"Unyaa----"
"Nyuu----"

I wasn't able to suppress my scream. But anyone would be surprised if they were in the dark.
Encouraged by that fact, I harshly scold at the someones who are in the dark.

"Don't raise your voice suddenly! I'll have to draw again now!"

"Sorry~?"
"Nano desu~."

Those someones frankly apologizing making me losing my tension.
The sun gradually rises and I can see the faces of those girls.

Those girls are beast-men.

◇

I was surprised at first and shouted, "Don't come here!".
But Pochi and Tama didn't mind it.

"I'll help~""Nodesu~."

Saying so, they begin pulling water in place of me. Pochi quickly pulls the rope like a joke.
I wonder just how strong beast-men children are. Or maybe these girls are special?

After Pochi is finished drawing the water, this time Tama says, "Unfair~? Tama will also do it~", and begins drawing water. These girls must have thought that this is a play or something!

Oh god I'm sorry, Yuni is a bad girl.
I use the two who are happily playing around until the bucket is full of water. Moreover, not only drawing, they also help me carrying the water.

As a thanks, I will share today's meal with these girls.

◇

I break apart the black bread I've received as breakfast and bring it to the two with soup.
The work here is hard but it's nice because I get delicious meal.

Even without garnish, the soup is far better than the thin soup that is occasionally served on the orphanage, even the slightly sour black beard goes well with it.

There's no the bittt~er steamed gabo fruit or pickled gabo leaves as the only meal!

The two will surely be delighted!

While thinking so, I go to the stable.

There's a big lizard-man woman beside the two girls there!
I'm scared enough to almost drop the soup bowl, but I can't waste the important meal! I frantically bear it.

"Yuni~?""Nano desu~."

The two girls welcome me.

But, wait?

Hey, what are those in your hands?

"Meat~?""Cheese nano desu~."

No way~~~~!
Eh? Eh? That's a lie right?
You can't eat meat even after so many years right?

How do slaves, two demi-human slaves at that, get that kind of expensive thing?
Furthermore, it's quite a big lump!? Huh?

I hold out to keep my drool.
It came out a bit but I immediately wipe it.

"I thought I'd eat with you together..."

'I'll share you this', giving like I'm above them, would be quite comical.

"Ara, aren't you the errand girl? What's your name again?  Since you're here already, why don't we eat together?"

From behind the lizard girl, two girls come out. The who started talking is a violet-haired girl of the same age as me, and the other is a black-haired Onee-san with regrettable face.

The violet-haired girl, talks in a really bossy way that I wonder if she's really the same age as me, but she, Arisa, is. She cut the dried meat and cheese lumps and shares it with me.

The lizard girl, called Liza, is going to say something but, Arisa says, "It's fine, the little girl's share is trivial. Master will surely consent!  If he's mad then I'll be the only one who'd get scolded, moumantai.", and Liza-san understands. I don't really understand what Arisa is saying but now is the time to savor the taste of these meat and cheese.
I puff my cheeks like a squirrel while thoroughly enjoying the taste many times over. I'm sure that I'll remember this day for a while, and I'm confident that even gabo fruits would taste like meat and cheese!

◇

Rather than dividing my meal as a thanks, I got to eat delicious things instead.
Furthermore, after the meal, Pochi and Tama help me taking care of the horses. The two are really strong.
Even Liza-san who was bored, helps changing the litter boxes of the horses.

I thought that demi-humans are scary, was I wrong?

◇

There are good things and also bad things.
The landlady told me and Martha to buy firewoods from the lumber shop.

Umm?  Do we really have to bring this two bundles to the inn?
Martha-san says, "Yosh! Let's do our best~." but you won't be able to easily carry it you know?

Still, I'm an employee, I won't complain. If I carelessly complain I might get fired, and I don't know if I could get another job then. In the future, if possible I don't want to become a courtesan at the street corner.

I lift the firewoods with all my power.
My feet are staggering, but I won't lose.
Since Marthan-chan is carrying bundle of firewoods even bigger than mine!

Carrying the firewoods.

Yes, carrying it.

...Carrying firewoods.

When I'm about to faint, the weight is suddenly no more.

I look up and an unknown man has taken my firewoods.
No, don't take it! I must bring that home!

Before I could complain, Martha-san thanks him.
I said he's unknown, but when I look at him again, it turns out that he's a guest on the inn. He's the person who gave me tips lavishly just by bringing water to his room this morning. It seems he's called Satou-san.

Satou-san not only carry my firewoods but also Martha-san's.

A man is strong after all. He's carrying it without breaking a sweat. I didn't notice it before, but Pochi and Tama who are carrying big rucksacks are together with him. So the master of the two is this man. It might be good to be a slave of this man, I'm thinking such.

◇

When I get back to the inn, I continue to take care of the horses. Pochi and Tama also help me like in the morning.

That's okay.

It's okay?

But.

"Please don't, I'd be scolded by the landlady if I let a guest helps me!"

For the master who's wearing such expensive-looking robe, please don't help me taking care of the horses.

Please stop with that disappointed face.
It's like I'm doing something bad!

◇

"Plate!"

I declare so and flip the card.
The plate is drawn on the back.

"Yes~ this is the third!"

I carefully collect the card that I worked hard to get.

This is a tool for learning letters it seems. At first, Martha-san who can read letter was teaching us but in the middle, Arisa devised this play.

After that, everyone is engrossed with it! This is the first time I've done this play.
I've always wanted to learn how to read letters, but it was like saying, "I want to fly on the sky". It was such dream-like things....

But now it's different!
Only in a few hours, I've learned how to read 7 letters!

◇

Fun thing doesn't last for long they said, but this is too much.
Even though I've made new friends, tomorrow Pochi and Tama are going to leave this Seryuu city.

But I've made a promise to the two. I will absolutely learn words and write them a letter!
I don't know the cost to send a letter, but I have a secret saving of two copper coins. If I have this much, then I should be able to send a letter.

In the evening, when I've finished my work, Satou-san gives me a bag full of wood blocks. When I look inside, although they're a bit poor, they're the same thing as the learning cards.
He says, "It's a thank you for getting along with our girls.", and gives it to me. I want to thank him immediately, but I don't know how to express

this gratitude.

◇

Oh yes, the wood-block cards that Satou-san gave become extremely popular at the orphanage. Some interested older children asked for woods waste from the lumber shop and the children who are good with arts drew the pictures.

Even though a week hasn't passed since then, we have already finished making 3 sets.

It'd be nice if everyone becomes able to read letters in one year~
That's my dream.

It's nice if that really happen.
The work is hard as always, but after that day, I'm seeing more happy dreams each day.

# Web Novel Volume 5

# 5-1. Journey (1)

*

Satou's here. Typically in a game, it's walking in the beginning, carriage in the middle and teleportation or airship in the endgame, getting convenient as it goes.

A friend said that going on an adventure in a carriage is miserable.
Since this isn't an adventure, I guess it's okay to enjoy myself right?

◇

The wagon makes clattering and rumbling noise as it travels through the highway between hills.

"Uuu~."
"Nya~."

Whenever small animals like rabbits and rats show up near the bushes, Pochi and Tama react as if they're going to jump out of the wagon. Every time it happened, Liza seized the two by their waists. Alhough the wagon is only about 20 Km/H fast, so they won't get hurt even if they jump out.

"Pochi, Tama, you'll fall if you lean over too much, sit on the back of the coachman's stand."

"Yes nano desu."
"Ay~."

The two reply with good answers and place themselves on the left and right sides of the coachman's stand.
Though it's probably only until they find something else.

The winds are slightly cold, but since it's cloudless the warmth from the sunlight is pleasant.
After we got out of Seryuu city for a while, we came into a forest, or rather, a gathering of branching thickets. We came out of it after 1 hour, and now we're advancing through what you'd call hilly areas.
I could see shepherds herding their sheep on the other side of the hills sometimes. I've only seen goat-made products in the city, but there are shepherds too huh.

Gakon. Gakokokon.

The wagon shakes as the wheels are climbing up. From behind, I'm hearing Lulu's small shriek, and Arisa's abusive languages, but I'll pretend that I didn't hear it and let it carried away by the wind.

Since the highway is made to avoid the hills, it's winding. The ground is not paved with stone pavements, the soils are bare. As a result, the wheels stumble into rough spots several times. Although the horses are just moving along the course of the road by themselves, it's the coachman's job to fine tune the wagon.
Even though I'm supported by skill, due to the lack of my actual experience I couldn't avoid them all.

Arisa climbs above Pochi's head and shows her face from behind (me).

"I'd love for you to drive more carefully~."
"Don't be unreasonable to a novice coachman."

I put aside Arisa's protest irresponsibly. Pochi looks troubled with Arisa who nests on top of her head.
Oh, Pochi is counterattacking, she catches Arisa's hands and playfully bites it.

"W, wait Pochi, stop that. The sleeves will get sticky with drools~."
"Hamumu, nyanoresu~."

Arisa who pulls her arm back and Pochi who hounds her rush toward the luggage rack near the coachman's stand.
"Don't get rowdy now~", I warn them lightly. The wagon is shaking, it'd be bad if they fall.
Tama who sees Arisa and Pochi playing around looks raring to go.

Ah, Tama also participates in the war.
Since Tama isn't suited for patience or perseverance, I guess this can't be helped.

◇

The trip is more relaxed than I thought it'd be. Since this is a fantasy world, I thought that we would encounter some monsters or something, but there weren't any even up to now.
I tried searching in wide area but there were no dangerous animal or monster. At most it was just foxes. I spot packs of wolves sometimes but they're 10 kilometers away at the edge of the forest earlier, so there's no need to be vigilant for the time being.

When I went on a date with Zena-san back then, she said that the military is doing practice by regularly eliminate dangerous animals and monsters around the perimeter of Seryuu city. This is probably thanks to that.

Liza who seemingly couldn't let the little girls who were still playing around any longer, warns them. I had thought that they should be stopped soon, so it's helpful.

Replacing Liza, Lulu who took refuges on the back of the wagon sitting behind me.
Come to think of it, I haven't talk with Lulu much. Communication is important, let's talk with her properly from now on.

"Lulu, are you fine? You don't have motion sickness or the like right?"
"Y, yes!"

I thought that she wouldn't reply, but quite a surprised voice came out.
Right, she moved behind me silently, so she would be surprised if I call her out without turning my head.

The beastkin girls have high physical abilities and I thought that it's natural, but for Lulu who is just a normal girl, it would be surprising. I've almost replaced my common sense with unreasonableness--- I should be careful.

"You don't have to be so nervous. Just like Arisa--- or rather not, be more like Pochi and the girls who casually interact with me."
"Such things... Since I'm slave, it's unbecoming."

Lulu lets out a faint voice that sound as if she's about to disappear, seem like this will need some time.
For the time being, I should get her to get accustomed with having conversations with me.

"Lulu, do you have anything you like?"
"I like taking care of Arisa."

Is she a siscon?  No, it's probably just a normal sisterly love.
I'm reluctant, but I continue to talk about Arisa as the topic. To clear away her reserved attitude, it's important to continue the conversations no matter the topic.

"You really love your younger sister."
"I sometimes question who is the older one."
"Certainly, she really doesn't act like a 11 years-old."
"Arisa is a genius since she was a child."
"How was she?"

Rather than genius, it was because she had the experience from her previous life, but I'd better not talk about it huh?
After that, Lulu continues to brag about Arisa happily until noon. Humans are good at speaking about the thing they love, this is no different even in another world.

Lulu who talks about Arisa, looks very happy. Her eyes are sparkling, her cheeks faintly blush too. Her face which is normally that of beautiful girl, gets even more beautiful. I'm scared that I would fall into a dangerous world (lolicon) if I'm careless.

I could hear Arisa who seems to be in agony for being praised very highly behind but maybe because she understands my intention, it doesn't seem like she would interrupt Lulu's story.

When the wagon goes on a straight line for a while I look at the luggage rack. Arisa is writhing on the floor while Pochi and Tama are mimicking her by lying down on the sides. Noticing my gaze, the two look toward here while still on their mimicking position. I gesture that it's nothing, and then they resume to imitate Arisa happily.
Yup, peaceful is nice~.

Then, Lulu continues to talk about Arisa for nearly one hour after that.

◇

Let's change the story since Lulu's voice started to become hoarse.
Of course, I'm ready to hear Lulu's talk about Arisa anytime. Let's make Arisa participate if I need to punish her.

Just as I try to get the timing, I hear a cute growl from the side.
Confirming on the menu, it's about time for lunch. We could eat in the wagon as it continues but I want to check on the condition of the horses fixtures so I decide to take a break for the lunch. It's not like we are in a rush, and we won't reach town for two or three days anyway.

According to the map, there's a boulders formation just up ahead, so I pick that place for the break.

"Let's have a lunch soon."
"Meal~?""Meat nanodesu!"

Pochi and Tama answer faster than Lulu who has become red on my side.
Jumping from back of the wagon, a girl shows her face.

"Shall I cut some cheeses and breads if we're going to eat in the wagon?"

Liza, weren't you just keeping watches on the back of the wagon?
Arisa who has revived follow after Liza. Her voice has become hoarse while her hair is in disorder, she's a bit scary.

"We have a nice weather today, let's eat like we're having a picnic~."
"That's right. Looks like that there's a boulders formation up ahead, let's take a break for 1 hour there."

After that we advance through the road for awhile, in the middle of the way we get out of the highway and climb a hill. The carriage shakes and loses its speed because the ground is underdeveloped grasslands. I advance the wagon carefully.

Soon, we can see the boulders.
Each and every one of them is quite big. The boulders are about 2 meter high and nearly 7 meter wide.

I stop the wagon near on the side of a boulder.
I descend from the coachman's stand, and help Lulu to get off it.

Arisa jump toward me while saying, "Tou!", like some kind of hero, I avoid her.

"Wait~ Aren't your treatment toward me getting worse?"

"That's not true at all. You're cute Arisa.", I answer half-heartedly, and lowered the fixture of the wagon.

"You didn't put your heart into it!  You'll stray off the path of delinquent soon~"

Your vocabularies reeks of Showa era like usual.
Pochi and Tama also imitate Arisa, "Tou~?""Tou nano desu~", they're jumping while saying that. It's good that they didn't imitate the pose.

I release the yokes on the horse and tie the veins on the wagon. I check on the fixture of the wagon, and it seems that the horses bodies don't have scratch so it's fine.

Liza comes down with a barrel filled with water, I give it to the horses. I'll give them the priority because they're the ones who work the hardest today.

"Liza, prepare something that's easy to make like sandwich or salad."

I ask Liza for the meal.
Since it's bad to only have Liza to do it, let's try to see whether Lulu or

Arisa can cook.

"Unfortunately, Arisa's female power level isn't high enough for cooking."

Arisa said so in monotone while looking toward the day after tomorrow.
Is she feeling guilty?  I won't say such old-fashioned thing like a woman have to be able to cook, okay.

"I've no experience in cooking, but I could do things like peeling fruits or making tea."
"Then, Lulu will act as Liza's assistant. Help her cooking by following her instruction."
"Yes! I will do my best."

I ask Lulu to help Liza. I wonder if she's happy for being helpful, I feel like she could get her voice out more around me like she has accustomed to me. I wonder if it's too early to think that?

Should I ask Pochi and Tama to collect firewood?
When I look at the two, they're exuding atmosphere like they're about to run toward the meadow. Their faces turn to me, but their ears twitches every time the bushes make sound.
Let's occasionally let them play appropriate for their age~.

"Private Pochi! Private Tama!"
"Ay!"
"Yes nanodesu!"

Good answers.

"I will assign you two a mission! Check the security around the perimeter of the boulders!"
"Ay!""Desu!"

The two begin to run like arrows. Let's remind them, "I'll call you two back when the meal is ready, so don't go too far~", so they won't overdo it. I guess I'll make Arisa to collect the fuel.

"Arisa, gather things like dead leaves and firewood near the bushes around here."
"Kay~."

I direct Arisa as I give salts to the horses. Arisa who doesn't have any particular complaint go to gather the firewood while singing some minor anime-like songs.

# 5-2. Journey (2)

*

Satou's here. Hiking is nice, isn't it. When you're surrounded by nature, fully inhaling the scents of the trees and the plants, you completely forget about all the unpleasant affairs at work.

◇

After I've finished taking care of the horses, I begin to compound for deodorants behind the wagon. I want to do something about the intense smells of the goat leather and wool.

During compounding, Liza come to ask if the meal is fine without soup since the firewood isn't enough. It's cold, and the black bread without the soup would be too hard.
I catch a sight of the Light Hot Plate beside me which I've used to heat water for compounding.
I decided to use this to help for cooking. After heating the soup with this, you could put the burning firewood until it's boiled. I'll leave the magic supply for Light Hot Plate to Arisa.

Still, I didn't think that gathering for fuel would be this hard. I should have bought them in Seryuu city.
I'll take out scrap woods from the Storage if we get in a pinch. The fact that the Item Box could only store item with particular size is a bottleneck.

◇

I, who have been making deodorant behind the wagon, could smell the nice aroma from the soup. The finished deodorant is in the form of a white powder. I put it in a small bag and it seems that you used it by mixing it together with the smell source.

I take out the goat leathers and wools from the storage and put them inside the Item Box in a small sack with the deodorant. Since they were too many to get inside, I leveled up the Item Box skill level to 4.

Liza comes to say that the meal is ready exactly right after I've finished my business even though she probably didn't watch me.

Now then, since the meal is ready I should call Pochi and Tama back.
I call them in loud voice.

Yup, let's buy a whistle when we get to a town.
I do have whistles in my Storage but it'd be disastrous if I blow it and make a kaijuu or an angel appear, so I won't.

"A prey nano desu~."

Pochi comes back while boastfully presenting a rabbit on her hand. The ears are short for a rabbit. According the AR, it's called Short-eared Rabbit. Pochi is dirtied with grass and mud from the top of her head to her foot, but she's smiling nicely.

I relay the rabbit I've received to Liza.
I praise Pochi while stroking her head. Since I can't let her have a lunch like she is, I put water to a bucket and wash her face and arms with it. I've made this policy from the time we were in the labyrinth before we had meals, so when she's presented with the water bucket, she's splashing the water around. Lastly, she shakes her head to remove the water without using a towel. This habit of her is irreparable it seems.

"Meat~? I've brought it~."

This time it's Tama who has come back, her voice comes from behind.
I wonder what did Tama catch?  Is it a bird~?

"Meat! ...nano desu?", Pochi tilt her head in puzzle midway.

When I turn back, the thing that Tama holds is an about 80-cm high rat... or not. The AR shows that it's a rat-man.
The rat-man seems to be unconscious, but at least he's still alive.

"Tama, please let that one go."

While looking a bit sad, Tama says, "Prey~ No good~?", she's coming here while tilting her head.
I almost allow it involuntarily, but let's not eat men. I should teach her about this gradually.

"You'll hurt your stomach, so no."
"Aye~."

Tama begins to spin on spot while still holding the rat-man. Then, she throws the rat-man across the meadow.

Oioi, that was too wild no matter how you look at it.

The rat-man has its HP decreased by a little, but it seems to be alive.
Since we treated him too rough, I decided to check if he has any external wounds. Before that, I scold Tama properly.

The rat-man doesn't seems to have any injury. According to AR, he doesn't have any skill, age 2. As expected of rats, they grow fast. He's grasping something that look like a ball of mud on his hand, but, since I have no interest on it, I leave it alone. It's probably this child's boxed

lunch.
Since he only seems to have fainted, I put him on a meadow a bit away from our camp. I put several fruits beside him as a remuneration for the trouble.

On the other hand, Liza has quickly dismantled the rabbit that Pochi caught and she is grilling it now. The entrails that has been washed then properly cut into tiny pieces by Liza, and fried together with some herbs. By the way, we're using a dead tree from the other side of the boulder found by Tama as the fuel.

"My stomach is hungry nodesu~."
"Copycat is bad nano desu~."
"Meat~ nano desu~."

Arisa demands for lunch while imitating as Pochi. Pochi protests at her, Tama follows suit.
...this is slightly amusing nanodesu.

Since the rat-man doesn't seem like he'll wake up, we decided to begin our meal.

Liza holds out the biggest piece of meat.
I pass it to Pochi because she's the MVP this time. The second biggest one is given to Tama. She was no good with the prey, but she played an active role in securing the firewood.

The meat of the rabbit is tender and delicious. I don't know if whether this is because of Liza being good at cooking or the fresh ingredient, but good food is good food.
I'm offered the herb fried entrails, but since the meat is enough, I decline.

Kasakasa.

Even if I don't look at the direction of the sounds, I know from the radar that the rat-man who has awakened runs away. When I check on it later, the fruits has been properly taken away.

◇

I'm enjoying a tea break with Liza and Lulu after the meal.
Lulu pours me the tea. She was taught in the royal court even if it was just a small country, so the tea made by Lulu is on different level than the one I usually drank. Truly delicious.
Seemingly not at all dissatisfied when I praise her, even while acting humble, her face is smiling.

Arisa follows Pochi and Tama along to go on a sightseeing of the boulders. The person itself said, "I'm surveying", of course, but I could only saw pleasure trip on her mind from her tension.

I search the map while enjoying the tea's aroma.

I tried to look for rat-men, but the only rat-man around here is the child earlier. I wonder if he's a lost child?

From the map, there's a hidden village dozen of kilometer away southeast from here, so he's probably a lost child from a rat-man village outside of the earl's territory. Fortunately the lost child is running into the direction of the village, and the dangerous animals are only foxes, so he's probably going to be okay even left alone.

Since I was only searching for monsters' special attacks or level earlier, I had missed the rat-man. There might be thieves too, so I make an adjustment to the search pattern.

Mumumu, there are thieves. Although there is quite a distance, and the highway is separated from the southeast mountain so we probably won't encounter them anytime soon.

Uoh!
When I narrowed it further, red dots begin to rapidly appear on the screen, but there's nothing when I look around.
Normally insects or small animals won't be shown since I've made it OFF by default.

When I face toward the nearby red dot, something is escaping.

Is it a small animal  looking for leftovers? If this was a game, then, animals which likely won't be enemies would be excluded from the start. This is troublesome.
I guess I should exclude anything with level 1 without poison. They won't hurt even if they bite anyway.

Alright, I've excluded anything without poison or special abilities.

Hm~mm, the red dots still isn't decreasing.
No wait, when I look better, are those insects? Mosquito-like insects are flying. Furthermore, they have [Race Characteristic: Blood-sucking].
Right, mosquitoes suck blood, don't they?

Let's put aside this setting only for when we go to mountain or thickets, and exclude anything beside thing with poison in normal situation. I'll do something about creature I see for the first time with AR. If they're level 1 then elimination them is trivial anyway.

◇

When I'm just about to finish the adjustment, I could hear Arisa's voice calling me from the top of the boulder.
How did she climb that up?

"Is there anything?"
"A bit, come up on top of this rock."

Pochi come backs from the back of the boulder while piggybacking Tama.
Apparently, Arisa had made this two to be the stepping stone to go above.

"Arisa is unfair~."
"Pochi also wants to go up nodesu."

[TLN: Yes, this isn't a typo. Pochi occasionally doesn't use 'nano desu' but 'no desu'. I guess it sounds awkward so I'll make it 'nodesu' whenever she does from no own.]

Arisa stretch her arm to reach out, but it's impossible to pull us with one arm.
Since the two people looks eager to go on top, I raise them in turn.

Although because I can't find scaffolds for myself, I jump up once to get there at a blind spot of Liza and Lulu.

"See it from here."

I look at the direction where Arisa points at.
I'm seeing collapsed boulders there. What does Arisa want me to see?

"What am I seeing?"
"Mou, look at it properly."

I see. I finally understand what Arisa wants to show.

"Are those stones from shrine's archway (torii)?"

[TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torii]

"I can only make conjectures since they've collapsed, but looks like there are 3 collapsed torii lined up. Maybe there was a shrine here."

I stare at the remains of the torii's stones. I tell Arisa the information from AR.
I thought that they were just traces of megalithic civilizations, but...

"It's a broken Travel Gate."

It's a well-known gimmick for shortcuts when you're traveling in a game. The ones here seems to have been broken since ancient times, so I don't know the how or if it's possible to repair.

Hearing that, Arisa enthusiastically says, "You can fix it?!" but I briefly answer, "Impossible."

It is attractive to have shortcuts like the one from games, but I'd like to refrain from jumping into an unknown location.
I didn't think too much about this before I become the person concerned, but I wonder why games' protagonists could so simple-mindedly go through gates.

It seems that the boulders has magic catalyst properties, they momentarily react when I try to pour it magic. Although I don't want it to end up with, [You've been trapped inside a stone], situation if it malfunction, so I'll stop acting rashly.

◇

Right after we depart, the three little girls went straight to the dreamland. As soon as the wagon started running, they immediately went asleep, probably because they're full. Arisa seems to have lost to her physical

limit too.

"Master, could you possibly teach me how to drive the wagon?"
"That's fine, you can sit here."

I agree to Liza's request and make a space on the coachman stand.
It'd be helpful to have people who could drive the wagon beside me, let's teach the other members later.

"Do you want to try it too, Lulu?"
"Yes, I'd like to."

I tried to bring this matter to Lulu who's sitting right behind me, and unexpectedly got a good answer.
I stop the wagon for a moment, and change place with Lulu while holding the reins from the luggage rack. I make Lulu to sit on the coachman stand for training of her together with Liza.

"First, it's about the operation of reins."

I give Liza the reins first.

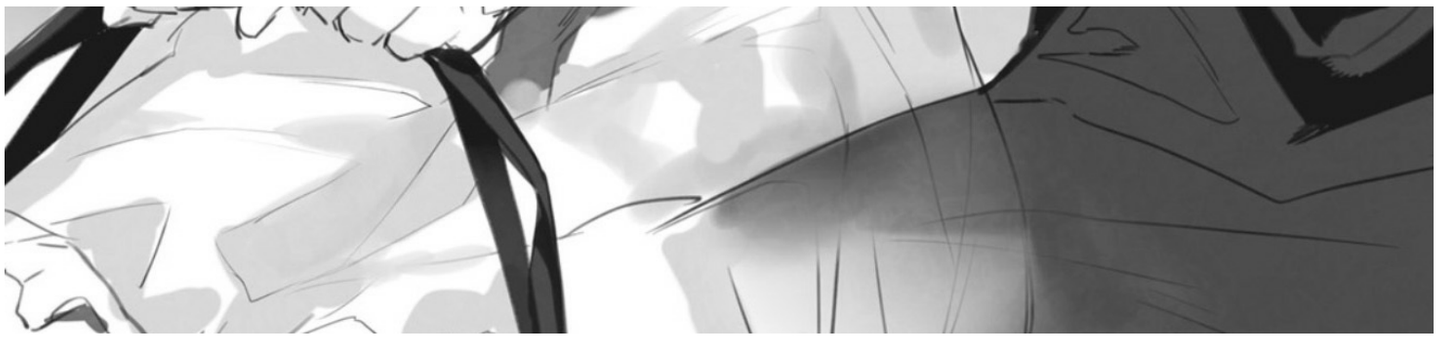
"Hold the reins a bit loose. But be careful not to make it too loose."

I teach the two like how Yosagu-san taught me.
The two only make minor errors which is normal for people who are tense, and have successfully learned how to drive.

Liza's driving is, though a bit rough, enough for a passing mark. She learned it several hours faster than me, and she's already at the level where she could replace me holding the reins.

>[Education Skill Acquired]

Lulu's driving is, although a bit more unreliable than Liza, fine enough to drive in a flat plain. It'd be fine if she practices it little by little.
While I and Liza watch over her, the wagon driven by Lulu shakes and rumbles while proceeding along the highway between the hills.



# 5-3. Black Mist

*

Satou's here. Although we have what we call pending plans, Death March doesn't exist in this world if I could just smoothly schedule the minute details beforehand.

◇

"Yiss~ 10 straight victories!"
"It's only Arisa who wins, unfair~ Pochi also wants to win~."
"Tama too~"

I can hear the little girl's voices from behind. The members beside me have been playing the learning cards for about 2 hours.
Since I couldn't really look away, I don't know the details but it seems that Arisa has continue to childishly won.

"Arisa, here's the commemoration for 10 successive victories."
"What is it? A picture book?"
"If you could win that many, then you should be able to read it right?"
"Nnn~ I could probably do."
"Then read it for Pochi and Tama. If they're only studying the learning cards, they would get bored before they remember the letters."
"Aye aye."

At first Arisa was reluctant with the picture book I held out, but she finally consented and spread the book open on the floor.
Still, it's amazing that she could learn it in two days.

Pochi and Tama who were complaining since a while ago, quietly sat and perked their ears when the story began.

With nothing but Arisa reading the picture book as a BGM, the wagon continues advancing.

I ask for a change of coachman since I want to search the location for our campsite today on the map.
I wanted to ask Liza at first, but since she's listening to Arisa's story with a serious face, I ask Lulu instead.

"Please handle the wagon for a bit."
"Yes, master."

I move to the edge of the coachman stand to make space for Lulu. I pass the reins, and want to concentrate on the map but from Lulu's point of view, I'd look like a master who sits beside her in silent... I don't want that.

I migrate to the luggage rack behind and lean my back on the stand.

I immediately look at the map to select the camping ground. Actually, I've thought of a several candidates before we started the journey, but unfortunately the distance we have traveled is shorter than I thought so they're unusable.

There are about 4 hours more before the nightfall.
If we run on this hill for about 3 hours then we'll get closer to the valley between the east and west mountains. According to the book that I've bought from the bookstore back then, [Journey to the Royal Capila], the valley up ahead is a difficult place so I want to make a camp before it.

From what I've seen on the map, there are two locations that could be used for it. The place up ahead has a pond nearby, should I go there? Something like water spirits or aquatic monsters would usually appear in fantasy setting, but according to the map there are only big frogs there so

it should be okay. Big frogs are different from giant frogs from the labyrinth; they're not monsters but just common amphibians.
I wonder where do you draw the line between monsters and normal creatures?

◇

"Master."

I got called out by Lulu who rarely does it.
Since her voice sounds a bit bewildered, I move the map to the edge of my view.

"What's wrong Lulu?"
"U, um, please look at that."

I put my face beside Lulu and look at the place she's pointing at, black mist is moving from one side of the southeast mountain.
Still, it's quite far. She did well to see them.

"Just a bit ago, birds were flying out from the side of that mountain so I was curious. Then, that black mist appeared."
"I wonder what is that?"

That place is beyond the scope of the map. I look hard there.
The AR indicate that it's [Unidentified Flying Insect Monsters]. The details don't appear because this AR is linked with the map.
Appraisal also doesn't work when I try to use it, it's probably outside of its effective range.

"What what? Is there something~?"
"Arisa, continue~?"

"Something nodesu?"

Arisa hangs over me, popping half of her body outside onto the coachman stand. Furthermore, Tama gets on top of Arisa.
I can only imagine this from the presence, but it seems that Pochi also got on them but she fell.

"There's black mist-looking thing over there."
"What's that?"
"It's black, so, Bats?"

Pochi is pressing forwards with her nose first on the narrow space between me and the wagon's canopy. I'd like to tell her that she's going in the reverse direction.
Our eyes meet for a while, then I open some space in front of me and fix Pochi's direction.

"Black lumpy is moving nodesu."

Oh, amazing. She could look at these distances?
If they're flying-type monsters then they could probably get here in 10 minutes.
In a moment, I decided that I'm going to move the wagon into hiding and go outside to see the situation.

"Lulu, call me if we get close to that forest you can see from here."
"Y, yes."

I put Arisa who was riding on my head beside Lulu.

"Arisa, observe the black mist's movement beside Lulu. Since that black mist might be monsters, get ready for battles."

Liza reacts to the word, 'monsters'.

"Pochi, Tama, get ready for battle."
"Aye aye sir~."
"Roger~ nanodesu."

Who taught them those words. Nah, I don't even need to hear it, there's only one truth like always.

Even though I said to get ready to battle, it's only for Liza to hold the spear and for Pochi and Tama to arm the swords. Tama passes pebbles for stone-throwing from the bag to Pochi.
I thought that her bag looks heavy, so there were those things inside huh.

Liza puts the stones she receives from the two on a small bag tied to her waist.
I take out a crossbow from the box and prepare it. Although I'm just preparing the bowstring. I haven't set the bolts, since it's dangerous.
After I confirmed that Liza and the girls' preparation is complete, I take out 3 additional crossbows and 200 bolts.

◇

"They're coming, a part of that black mist is moving."

It's still not in the map range. When I look at the mountain over Arisa's head, a part of the black mist on the foot of the mountain is certainly moving.
I change place with Lulu to be the coachman and make Arisa and her go back inside the wagon.

After Liza and the girls said that their preparation is complete, I accelerate the wagon.

Arisa asks me in low voice.

"Master, couldn't you see their level with Menu or something?"
"They're out of range. If I could get as close as 10 Km then I would know."
"I wish permission to use magics if the monsters get close."

I give permissions to use magics beside the uniques or the ones she used on the flea market.

"I want to use monster avoiding space (Dodge Field) too. I'd also like to have permission to use Sleep Wave, Sleep Field, and fatigue space <<Ennui Field>>."

I give permission after hearing the description of each magics.

"If the enemies are many, then make them sleep with the sleep magic."
"It's ineffective when the opponents are agitated."

Arisa said while smiling wryly. Then isn't there no meaning for that in battle?

"That's why I want to combo it with <<Ennui Field>>."
"Although you don't use it often, you sure have the knack for it."
"Yep~ But unfortunately, since it doesn't distinguish between friend or foe, it's only for the last resort."
"Don't you have means for direct attack?"
"I could use mind shock bullet (Psycho Ball) and mind shockwave (Shockwave), but at most it could only stun the opponents."
"If you cooperate with Liza, then those two attacks could be quite usable."

I give permissions to use the two magics.
I wonder what those crowds of monsters are chasing?

Monsters emerge from the edge of the map.

"Hexapedal boar (Dash Boar)?"

Rat-men are on the same position as them. The luminous points on the map are moving together. It seems that they're cavalry beasts. Their speed is near 50 Km/H. There are 5 of them.

"What are those?"
"The beasts that the rat-men ride to run away from that black mist."

The dash boars are level 5-6, the rat-men who ride them are level 3-7. Their positions are bad, if we leave it as it is then they'll come from behind us.

The black mist enters the map range a few minutes late from the cavalries.

"The monsters coming from behind are called Flying Ant, they're only level 2-4 but they're troublesome because of their poison and acid attacks."
"Geh, are the poison and the acid lethal?"
"It seems that the acid burns. The poison is the paralyzing type, so it'd be fine if you're only bitten by one."

That said, if we get carelessly paralyzed, we'd be surrounded to death. There are already 50 flying ants which have appeared chasing the rat-men.

When our talk is over, the rat cavalries break through the forest 200 meters away from us and cross the highway, missing the hill.
Alright, seems that they won't come here. While apologizing to the horses in my mind, I steel my heart and whip them. Me, Liza and the girls could deal with them, but it'd be dangerous for Lulu and the horses if they catch up.

I can hear loud striking sounds from the other side of the forest. There are 89 in total which chase the rat cavalries.

Let's just let them go past.
My optimistic thought ends when Arisa reports from behind.

"One of them is coming here."

# 5-4. Flying Ants (1)

*

Satou's here. A member of society with workaholic tendency, Satou.

It's not like I can't understand when people liken hard workers with ants, but I don't want to get along with dog-sized ants.

◇

I know from the radar that there is one flying ant coming here. Since there is a considerable speed difference, it's just a matter of time before it catches up.

"Lulu, evacuate from the coachman stand. Arisa, are you confident with your aim using the stun magics you mentioned earlier?"
"As long as the range is within 20 meters, it's fine."

I take out a cane from the back of the wagon-actually I take it from the Storage-and give it to Lulu who passes it to Arisa.

"Eh~ It's plain, but it's quite a good cane."

I won't speak of it, after all it's more expensive than Arisa.

"Shoot twice then fall back even if you miss and switch with Liza. Pochi and Tama will cover Liza."
"Kay~."
"I understand, master."

Pochi's and Tama's answers are a bit late.

"Nyu~?"
"Is it okay not to throw the stones?"

Oh yeah, I forgot about the throwing stones. Since I want to confirm the stun magics type for now, let's keep them as reserves.

"This time it's fine not to throw the stones. I want you to concentrate on the ant which got onto the wagon."
"Aye aye sir~."
"Roger~ nano desu."

The relative distance is under 100 meters.
The other ants are chasing after the rat cavalries who go toward the hill.

50 meters. Lulu who probably feels uneasy is grabbing the cuff of my clothes.

30 meters. The sound of the wings is approaching.

20 meters.

"Mind Shock Wave (Shock Wave)."
"It falls~?"
"Arisa, amazing nodesu."

The ant which got hit by Arisa's attack seems to have fallen onto the ground. Although according to the map, it's still alive. As expected of insects, they're not so soft as to die from crashing.

"The magic knocked it down, but it's not defeated yet. Though it's fine if we could just kill it before it woke up..."

Certainly, it'd want to return to its nest when it wakes up.

"Ants, lots of them nano desu!"
"Guh, it's impossible to link with these numbers~"

Pochi's voice is a bit late compared to the radar which shows red dots swarming here.
They're forming groups with 8 monsters in each of the 4 groups.

"It's a bit too many."
"Yeah, even if I successfully use Shock Wave, it'll probably only affect three of them."
"Can you fire it continuously?"
"I can't, the chants could make it in time, but I can't cancel it until I release the magic power."
"Pochi, Tama, restrain the enemies by throwing stones at both sides. If they come within Arisa's range, switch with her."

I could be the shooter too but it's impossible to leave the reins to Lulu, what should I do.

"It's Tama's tu~rn."
"I won't lose nodesu~."

I look back at the state of the backseat for a bit. Tama and Pochi are throwing stones. Liza supports them to recover their posture after throwing the stones.

"Atatta~?"
"They're falling no desu."
"Yosh, you did great, children! Shock Wave!."

It seems that they've shot down the first four enemies, and the radar reflects---following them, the enemies are decreased by four.
There are two enemies who caught up to the wagon from behind, but one of them is skewered by Liza's spear and the other one who jumped inside

is skillfully dealt with by Pochi and Tama.
I'm guessing that's what happened from the noisy sounds from behind and the change of luminous points on the radar.

I can't afford to look back yet.
The ants are swarming on both sides of the wagon, I shoot any ants which go ahead on one side with magic pistol while ants which come from the other side get mercilessly kicked by me.
The kicked ant, becomes part of the scenery while scattering in pieces.

◇

The second wave of the ants is disposed with the same flow too.
But it seems that the ants have moderate intelligence, the third and the fourth waves are attacking from the shadow of the thickets on the left.

The ants are flying in parallel on both side of the thickets 300 meters away from us, it seems that they're waiting for chances. The range is not enough for the magic pistol.
I ease the wagon's speed and leave the reins to Lulu.

I take the crossbow leaned against the coachman stand, an put the bolt on the bowstring.
I can see the ants' bodies from the gap of the trees. I aim for the ant on the tail of the queue.

I aim at its future position---

Shoot.

"No matter how you look at it, you're just wasting arrows."

A luminous dot disappear from the radar.

"It's fine as feints. Arisa, I leave you to watch out for the back."
"Hoi!"

While talking, I shoot at the next ant. I can hardly believe it myself, but after this, every nocked arrow hit its target without fail. Along the way, we're about to leave the forested area, but it's too late. Every ant has been shot down before we passed the area through.

◇

"Lulu, it's okay to lower the speed now."
"Y, yes."

I put back the crossbow, and go to receive the reins from Lulu. Maybe because she holds it with all her might, her hands can't come off, I gently take her finger off the reins one by one.

"Sexual Harassment?"
"Not."

I was looking at Lulu's graceful hands, but I change to look at the inside of the wagon.
Arisa is looking here over her shoulder from the very back of the wagon. I don't have anything to feel guilty about, what an impolite girl.
I must tell everyone that the first stage of the battle is complete.

"Everyone, thank you for your hard work, we have successfully repelled

the ants it seems."
"What about the ones before this forest area?"
"Seems that they've given up and returned."

I look behind and give everyone words of gratitude. Tama and Pochi are having an argument about the one who defeated the most enemies but Arisa boastfully says "I defeated 7 of them~♪".

"U, um, master... y, your hand."

I turn toward Lulu since I could hear her small voice beside me.
Oops, I've been holding her hand. This is really sexual harrasment then. I separate our hands and apologize to Lulu.
It feels like she's shy about it but doesn't dislike it, it must be my imagination though. I'm not a middle-schooler, I should have limits to misunderstanding.

"Is it fine if you let me be the coachman?"

Lulu asked in modest voice, as a result, I leave Lulu to be the coachman. I sit next to Lulu, open the map, and check on the state of the rat cavalries.

This is bad.

The rat cavalries are reduced to three, but they're going strong.
While bringing along the Flying Ants, they detour the hill by making a big arc.
And with their current course, they will surely cross with this wagon.
I change places with Lulu. I don't want to let Lulu sits on the direction where they will appear.

"The other rat cavalries seem to be coming here while bringing the flying ants. I'm sorry, but prepare for battle once again."
"How many are there?"

"52 ants."

It seems that the rat cavalries have managed to defeat five.
Those rat cavalries show up on top of the hill. I have a feeling that the rat-man with red helmet met eyes with me. The guy's dash boar is larger than the others. Enough to let two people onboard.

That rat cavalry approaches our wagon, and begins to run parallel with it. The other two lower their speeds, seemingly to attract attention of the ants.
When it get beside the wagon, the rat-man lowers his helmet and shows his face, even though he has rat's face it's nihilistically handsome and looks like it's saying something.

"◆◆◆◆! ▼▼▼▼! ●●●●!"

>[Ash-Mouse Tribe Language Skill Acquired]
>[Green Scales Tribe Language Skill Acquired]
>[Elf Language Skill Acquired]

Somehow, I got various languages skills.
After thinking what could happen later, I decided to take the [Elf Language] skill. I raise it to level 3 and activate it.

"Human, words, don't you understand?!"
"Sorry, but, can you quickly get away? I don't want to get involved."

Even though I've purposely learned other language, the Shiga kingdom language came out. I complained back with Elf language, since I'd complain anyway even if I use Shiga language.
Putting me aside, I won't allow our girls to be in danger.

"Oh! You understand Elf language do you, then I have a request!"

Oioi, you're asking now after getting us involved?

"Please take care of the princess. If possible until she gets home, but if you can't then at least until you give her to the same tribe."

After saying that, the red helmet throws someone wrapped in thick coat he has been carrying to here.
I receive her in hurry. It seems that she has fainted.

When I look back, the red helmet has gone back to help the other two fight the ants.
I lay the girl in the wagon and go to very back where Arisa and the girls are. Even without seeing the battle, their (the cavalries) luminous dots are already gone from the radar.

The red helmet most likely chose to die a honorable death. The girl earlier is probably that much important.
However, reality tramples on such thought.

An ant jumps on Arisa and the girls, and another one jumps on this wagon.

# 5-5. Flying Ants (2)

*

Satou's here. Shooting games were popular a long time ago, but I didn't play it. But since my work was related to FPS, I did play them in game shows...

◇

The flying ants formed groups of 8 ants and then start to head toward this wagon.

I pass 4 crossbows to everyone except Lulu who is handling the wagon, and give them a simple lecture for its operation.
Use the lever to pull the bowstring, then put the bolt on the rail and pull the trigger. If you don't think the hitting the target part, it is actually quite simple.

"Take a stance... shoot!"

Matching my signal, the bolts fly. The target is the approaching swarm.

Three ants were shot down. After setting the next bolts, we shoot once again. This time we hit two.

We won't make it for the next volley, but Arisa unleashes Shock Wave as we've arranged before, and shoots down the remaining three.

Because the next group is getting closer than the one before, after shooting one volley of bolts, we decrease their number with Shock Wave, and then, the remaining two ants fall prey to Liza's spear and my zero-distance bolt shot.

"Master, do you have any MP recovery medicine?"

I give three of it to Arisa. After receiving it, Arisa puts one hand on her waist and gulps down the energy drink in one breath.

"The next one is dangerous."

Yes, for the next wave, three groups are attacking at once. We are already shooting with bolts, but it doesn't look like they're decreasing. The saving grace is the fact that there's still some distance.

"Please give permission for me to use Over Boost. I could somehow do something to half of them."

During the pause of our conversation, Arisa gulps down another medicine.

"I understand, I permit you."
"Thank you, I love you."

Please don't raise a strange flag.
Arisa's light joke is a bit stiff.

"Over Boost!"

Matching Arisa's Command Words, light violet aura gusts forth.
She holds the long cane, and begins to chant orally.
The violet aura are forming great numbers of magic circle on the center of the long cane.

"■■■ ■■■■■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■ Shock Wave"

An invisible shock wave tramples down upon the swarms of ants. The

ants who got hit directly, different from what happened until now, die while spilling their bodily fluids from their heads. The other ants who got hit by the aftermath wave are also spinning around until they fall.
Even though Arisa said half, in actuality, all three of the groups become unable to fight. As expected of unique skills.

I gently catch Arisa who blacks out.

"My eyes are spinning~."
"Round and round~ nano desu."
"Perhaps this is the effect of Arisa's magic, I feel a bit dizzy."

The three seems unable to stand due to the after effect. I leave Arisa to Liza, and decide to clean up the remaining five ants which were late.
I have Lulu to stop the wagon.

"Pochi, Tama, pull the strings of the crossbows."
"Aye.""Desu."

The two looks exhausted, but they're doing their best to set up the crossbows.

Whenever I shoot the crossbow, I exchange it with the loaded one from Pochi or Tama.
This feels like Nagashino.

[TLN: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Nagashino]

After clearing the swarms up, I fire at high angle aiming at the fainted ants by confirming their position on the radar. I tried to mimic the protagonist from a manga I read long ago, but I didn't think that it would really hit.

Because I have no scope, I shoot continuously at the relative position where the enemies are crowding while learning the fine-tune. Even if the hit rate is no more than 20%, it should be enough.

Several of the ants who got shot down in the beginning are still alive, but it's impossible to hit enemies who are two kilometers away after all. The bolts can't reach them.

◇

We're taking a short break to quench our and the horse's thirsts.

"It's tiring but it's good that everyone is safe."
"Tir~""ring nodesu."
"Arisa still isn't coming to, is she alright?"
"She'd be fine after a night's sleep."

Seen from the AR, Arisa's stamina and magic power which have became zero are gradually getting restored.
Lulu is wiping her sweats with a wet towel.

"Liza and the girls, please collect magic cores, stingers and poison glands."
"The stinger is clear, but I wonder which part is the poison gland."

Since it's hard to explain it, I demonstrate to them by dismantling an ant and show the location of poison gland.

"Put the stingers in this bag and the poison glands in this container. It's enough to just collect 5 of each. Please take care not to get poisoned while doing it."

The remaining ants far in the distance seem to be withdrawing, the dots are decreasing on the map.

I entrust the wagon to Lulu, while I'm compounding several [Antidote: Flying Ant] from the poison glands as the raw materials. One of them could be made into five antidotes.

I lower the "Princess" the red helmet left from the wagon, and put her beside me while I'm compounding. I could put her on the bare ground, but then it'd feel like I'm abusing a child so I spread a sheet on the ground for her.

"Master, Arisa has awoken."
"Wait, no~ Didn't I say that you should tell『Arisa isn't waking up.』to master, and guide him to give me MP recovery medicine by mouth~."

It's really Arisa-like, but what are you doing exposing your own evil intention.
Since she did her best today, let's pardon her with just a forehead poke.

Arisa come from inside the wagon borrowing on Lulu's shoulder. She opens her arm and says, "Help me down", so I help her to get down.
Sure enough, she clings on my neck when she's getting down-- That's a feint, her real aim is to kiss me.

I barely succeed on avoiding her holding my ground, and hit her with porehead poke α. There's no meaning to the α.

"Auu, love is painful."
"Yes yes, I love you Arisa."

Looking at the wagon, Lulu also shyly stretches her arms. She's probably inspired by Arisa.
For Lulu who rarely shows her spoiled side, I gently hold her to get down.

Of course I did not hug her tight.
However, I'd like you to stop staring at me so sheepishly. I feel like I would forget the age differences.

"By the way, what is this? Is she something you got from the rat-tan?"

Rat-tan... she means the red helmet right. That's quite a cute nickname.

[TLN: Rat-tan = Nezu-tan in romaji]

"The red helmet said that she's a princess."
"Oh, a princess you said! Even though you have beauties from various races waiting for you, now you even want to add the rat princess into your harem!  This is why a man is so!"

You reeks of acting.

"M, master..."

Huh? By any chance, did Lulu take Arisa's words seriously?

"I, I'll also do my best to get your favor."
"Yes, yes, you're cute Lulu. But let's talk about favor after 5 years while refining yourself to be a woman."

Lulu's tension is strange, I wonder if this is an after effect of the battle. I unintentionally answer her like to Arisa.
Lulu puts both her hands on her cheeks, and she is twisting her body. It's cute, but what do I do now.

"We're~""Back~"
"We have come back, master."

The three came back at the right timing. There are 5 poison glands inside the container. The magic cores are plentiful inside the bag. And--

"Why are there a lot of stingers?"
"Yes, master had said that it's enough to collect 5 of them, but I wondered if it's possible to make disposable spears from them so I collected more."
"I see, let's make it next time."
"Yes! Thank you very much."

I likely will forget this, so I make a memo. If I forgot this kind of promise, it would gradually worsen our relationship.

Moreover, Pochi and Tama collected some parts of the red helmet and the rat cavalries equipments. There are no remains of the corpses, and the armor worn by the rat cavalries beside the helmet's were broken so they left it as it is. Also, I forgot about the recollection of bolts, but it seems that they have collected all the bolts besides the broken one.
Liza laments greatly at the fact that there is no meat left from the dash boars.

The "Princess" entrusted by the red helmet still hasn't awoken yet.

Since beasts might possibly gather at the ants' remains, we go ahead several kilometers with the wagon.

The camping ground is an open space with a small pond nearby. Lulu is really afraid with places without a pond. It may be some kind of trauma.

◇

After I've finished taking care of the horse, I'm reading books while drinking the teas brought by Lulu who came during the break of cooking.

I'm skim reading the travel journals I bought back then by unfolding

them in the menu. Since I don't want to look like I've gone senile, I open the introductory for life magic book wide turning it vainly.
It's probably better to read normal books, but it's more convenient to use the Menu because I could take memos and search for similar items.

I'm starting to smell a delicious aroma from dinner Liza and Lulu are cooking. They're making bean soup for today's dinner at my request.

"Oo~i""Preys~""We've caught it nodesu~"

The three girls who went hunting come back. I hope that they're not bringing fairies or something~
I slide the book sideway and look at the voices. With Arisa in the lead, Tama and Pochi are holding wild boars-- Of course, it's the four-footed ones-- high up.

It seems that they also hunt the ants which had fainted from the Shock Wave on the ants remains site.

"Master, please taste this."

Lulu brings a small bowl with soup inside.
Arisa said "Why only master, unfai~r", but she lost interest after being told that it's a bean soup and went to dismantle the boars with Liza.

I taste it. Yup, it tastes good thanks to the peppers I've bought from the high-class restaurant.

"It's delicious, I'll be enjoying the dinner."
"Yes! I'll work hard to help."

Lulu's expression has become quite natural.
I feel warm and fluffy now, but the the rat-men's "princess" who is beside me awaken.

# 5-6. The Rat Princess

*

Satou's here. Princesses are often present in fairy-tales. But don't you think that there are a lot of suffering princesses?
At least, I'd like it if they end up in happily ever after.

◇

"Have you come to?"

I asked gently while feeling relieved. However, the girl takes a leap to distance herself from me. No, she tried to but because of her anemia she got her feet tangled and tumbled over.

"...Where is Mize?"

I don't know that name, but I could only think one person.

"Is that the red helmet from the rat-man cavalries?"
"Yes."

Although she's right to be on guard, she sure is a taciturn girl.

"After entrusting you to us, he went to bravely fight the monsters... and died."
"It can't be..."

I hesitated for a bit whether to tell a lie to prevent her from getting shocked, but I decided to tell her the truth.
Her face went pale, she must be shocked.

"I am Satou. A traveling merchant. May I ask your name?"

I can see it with AR, but it's proper to introduce yourself to start a conversation.

"...Mia."

A short answer came out after a beat of silence.
Hu~m, it's difficult in quite different way than Lulu.

"Princess-sama, have awaken~"
"Ah, her name is Mia it seems."
"Eh~, I'm Arisa. Nice to meet you, Mia."

Arisa is dumbfounded after introducing herself and looked at Mia's face.

"What is the meaning of this, I wonder?"

Arisa is coming to me. Does she not use Status Check?

"What do you want to ask, say it."

Arisa takes a deep breath.

Inhales.

Exhales.

Inhales again.

"Why is it an elf!"

Arisa said so while pointing at the pale pointed ear of Mia.
Still, I don't think you need to be affected to this degree, right?

"It wasn't the rat-men's princess?"
"It's your fault that you did not properly check on it."

Certainly I thought that I was mistaken when I received her. Although, that's why I took the elf language in the first place. I conversed with Mia in elf language too, did Arisa not hear it?

"Kuh, even though I've made her a special cheese platter..."

I thought the saying that rats like cheese is just a folklore. Wasn't it the fault of western animations.

"Oh well. More importantly, let's eat!"

Arisa pull Mia's hand to make her forcibly stands up.

"If you're hungry, you'll just end up getting even more depressed, let's eat a lot and cry a lot!  That's the best memorial service for the departed."

Those are some good words coming from Arisa. I have a feeling that she quoted it from somewhere, but I won't make fun of it.
Mia is overwhelmed by Arisa's vigor, and she take a seat for the meal.
I interpret for the two of them while walking together.

◇

I understand this after we've talked for a bit, even though Mia can't talk in Shiga language, she can understand the rough meaning of it.
Thanks to that I could finish the meal without having to become an interpreter for the little girls.

From the AR, I know Mia's stat, her age is 130 years old. A woman. Level

7. Her skills are, [Water Magic], [Bow], [Spirit Seer], those three. Her titles are, [Maze's Master], and [Little Child of Boluenan Forest]. Her true name is Misanalia Boluenan. I think that her nickname should be Lia, is it because of a custom of the elves?
Mazes huh. Are those different from labyrinths?

From her appearance, she looks to be midway between Arisa's and Lulu's age. Her breast is even more humble compared Arisa-- for Mia's sake I won't talk more than this.
Her hair is light turquoise almost blue rather than green. Her pupils are beautiful emerald greens. Her skin is white, and her body is thin to the point of almost looking unhealthy.

Still, I'm worried whether I'm cursed with a spell that makes me draw little girls.

Mia is eating only vegetables while avoiding meats since a while. The meats that she refused are shrewdly taken by Tama. From the opposite side, Pochi is swapping her vegetables to Mia's plate.

If you're picky with your foods, you won't grow big you know?

The one I'm most worried about, Liza, is intoxicatedly chewing on the wild boar's leg meat, she's not paying attention to her surrounding. I'll leave her alone.

Lulu is busy acting as a waitress. Since Arisa is taking care of her, even while Lulu is busy, she's still properly eating.

"Boar meat is delicious~"
"Meat stuck on bones is good nodesu."
"Mia too, do eat without refrain."
'Meat, I dislike.'
"She dislikes meat she said."

"Arara, how very elf-like."
'I am an elf.'
"Lulu, don't give her only vegetables, please cut some fruits too."
'I like pears.'
"She likes pears she said."

Mia's replies were shorts, but she did what she could to establish communication with the little girls.

◇

After finishing our meal, everyone is drinking teas made by Lulu.
Since Pochi and Tama don't seem like they have interest with tea, they're enjoying an after-meal nap on the sheet. Liza and Lulu are doing the clean-up.

I search for [Bornean Forest] in the travel journal book. It's located south from here, adjacent to the a Shiga kingdom duke's territory. It's a bit off from the route to the Labyrinth city from here, but it's not like we could not go to it.

I'll be fine with escort her there, but it's probably a good idea to check the reason why those ants were chasing her. I don't think that it was just a chance encounter when it was that many.

I ask her in elf language. I'm careful as to not make it sounds like a cross-examination.

"Mia, I have a few things to ask you about, is it fine?"
"What?"

"Could I hear the reason why those large swarms of flying ant were

chasing you?"
"...They came to capture."
"Capture Mia?"
"Yes."

Mia answer my questions bit by bit. I feel bad for everyone else, but I'll translate the informations I got from the conversation to them later.

"Why did the ants want to catch you?"
"Because it's necessary."

Well, yeah, of course.
If I don't plan my question better, I won't get the answer I want.

"Who is the one who need you?"
"....a magician."

It's a good news that it's not the same kind as wagahai-kun.
[TLN: 'Wagahai' is how the demon back then refer to itself, pretty funky way to do so in Japanese.]

"Do you know why you're needed?"
"For the maze."

Still, mazes huh, this is a world with a lot of mysterious words huh. Her title is master of maze after all, I wonder if the maze can't function if she's not there.

"Where is the maze located?"
"...mountain."
"Is it near here?"
"Probably."

It's probably where that mist, or rather ants, came from.
Although, it's not like I intend to go there.

"What is that magician doing in the maze?"
"Making things like ants or puppets."

So the ant was made huh, they're like the subspecies of the ants from the labyrinth. By puppets, is it the moving dolls?
Nevertheless, even though I don't know for what reason the magician is gathering forces, it's probably not for something good. Judging from the position, it's to wage war with Seryuu city maybe?

"Do you know what they are made for?"
"...don't know."

Mia's face which had became red after taking the meal is turning pale. It looks like she knows but she doesn't want to tell or remember.

"Do you think that magician will come after you?"
"Surely coming."

That would be so huh.
That mean I can't just push her to the manager of the worker guild. If possible, I would have wanted to.

Even if war breaks out, I don't think that Seryuu city armed forces would lose, but the flying monsters might indiscriminately attack the girls I know somewhere in the city. It's painful to even think about it.
Should I become the silver masked hero, persuade or force the magician to give up on the maze, and push the magician to the soldiers on the gate of seryuu city?  I feel like the plan is too simplistic.

Lastly, let's ask what the person herself want.

"Mia, Mize-san asked you me to take you to your home or to the same tribe. Which one do you wish?"
"...I want to go home."

"I understand."

"Everyone, we'll take a detour to bring Mia home, is that fine?"

I asked everyone beside the two who were sleeping. Since no one disagree, it's decided.

# 5-7. Mistake and Clean-up

*

Satou's here. They said that carelessness is one's greatest enemy, but precisely because ones doesn't realize their carelessness that I feel that they would fail.
Things you get accustomed with are the most dangerous, it's the same for any world.

◇

Now then, shall I pay a visit to our magician comes midnight?
I'd hate to get attacked by the army of ants when the morning dawn
...ants are not nocturnal right?

I go inside the wagon alone, and begin to change my clothes. Since Arisa is peeking, I roll up my smelly sweaty shirt into a ball and throw it on her face. Suffer well in that stink.

I'm still wearing a mantle on the outside, but I change into thick trousers and shirt inside, and also knee-high leather boots. Since I will be trekking the mountain, it'd be inconvenient to wear a robe.

"Sniff, sniff, snifff."
"Arisa, stop it, that's vulgar."

This is the first time I saw Lulu scolding Arisa. Still, what the heck is this girl doing?  No, I understand when I see it, but I refuse to acknowledge it.... Aren't you too much of a pervert to sniff on a smelly shirt?
I take the shirt away from Arisa and give it to Lulu.

"I'm sorry, but please wash this when you're doing laundry."

"Yes, master."
"Before that, let me enjoy the teens' scent""Auu."

I poked her forehead before she finished.

"Love is too painful~ please do the punishing in more sensual way!"
"There are a lot of other girls who cry for being defiled, treat yourself better."
"Uuu~ I'm a maiden too."

A maiden wouldn't do such things--- At least publicly.

"At any rate, what are you going to do by changing clothes?"
"I'll do some reconnaissance."

I'm actually going to the magician's place, but I won't say it.

"I will accompany master."

And so Liza proposed, but I persuaded her to defend the camp. She insisted that I take Pochi and Tama as bodyguards, but when I said that I'd go back before the sun set, she let me go.

◇

Truthfully, I won't be going straight to the magician's place right away. I want to enlarge the search area before the next pursuing armies come, so I'm going to retrace the course until the area where the rat cavalries was devastated. I should be able to reach it before the sun set if I run.

After I reach a place invisible from the camp, I run at the level where the ground gouged. In just five minutes, I've reached the place where Arisa

massacred the ants with her unique skill.
The ants which pile up on one after another are obstructing the road. I lightly jump over it.
A lot of small animals are gathering, perhaps the monsters' corpses are delicious.

Even so, with this many monsters' corpses, it will interfere with the traffic.
If this was a game then it would disappear in time but reality is troublesome.

...Hmm?

...Dang.

"'Reality is troublesome', not that!"

I stop my feet, and look back at the mountain of monsters' corpses.

I'm imagining for a bit.
In a highway with scarce traffics, monsters corpses piled up. Corpses which died with no external injury and with only one arrow stuck. Normal person would be interested to know more. And then, the only wagon that has passed this route was ours.
If it's not someone really dumb, they would probably connect the corpses with us.

This is bad.

I change my plan, and indiscriminately stow away the monster corpses in the ants folder inside the Storage. I had thought of dismantling and throw them on the roadsides but I decided to use storage since it'd be too time-consuming.
Since the corpses are not displayed on the radar, I rely on my sight. It was

easy to remove the corpses on the open road, but the ones stuck on the thickets a bit away were hard works.
Nevertheless, thanks to me repeating the corpses retrieval with all my effort, the road is cleared from them as far as eyes can see before the sun set.

I'm hiding bloods and traces of battles with suitably long tree branches. They would probably attract attention but it's better than puddle of bloods in plain sight.
Since I see from the radar that Pochi and Tama are departing from the camp to look for me, I finish hiding the bloods with trees from the Storage and return.

This took more time than I thought, so I couldn't do my original goal.

◇

With Pochi and Tama hanging on my arms on the sides, I walk down the highway in sunset.
I'm hearing chewing sounds of small animals from the bushes on the roadsides. There are probably some pieces from the corpses, I feel sorry for taking away foods for the small animals. And it was unexpectedly hard to keep Pochi and Tama from pushing through to the bushes.

In a place 10 minutes walking distance away from the camp, I catch a monster on the radar.

Let's check the detail.

Gargoyle, level 5. Plainly speaking, it's a flying stone statue. Noteworthy points are complete immunity to mind attack and night vision. Also, it's hard, since it's a stone statue.

It could be an independent monster or a familiar of the magician. It's probably the latter this time.

Its moving speed is slightly faster than a person.
The gargoyle destination is probably the place where Arisa massacred the large groups of ants right?

"Master~?""What's wrong desu?"

Pochi and Tama pull my hands. I've stopped swinging them on my arms.

"Tama, do you have the throwing stones?"
"Aye."

Then, I should drop it with a stone.

"I forgot something, let's go back."
"Yes nano desu~.""Aye~."

I spin the two like spinning tops while on my arms. Since they demand to do it again, I do it thrice after that.
More, they said but since it'd be troublesome if we can't secure best location to attack the gargoyle, I promise them to do it again once we get back to the camp site.

◇

The three of us are hiding beside a shelter. Although I said shelter, it's just a rock as high as a grown man.

The gargoyle is flying overhead us.
After a moment pause, I throw two fist-sized stones with both hands. I

throw one more a beat later. All three stones hit the target and the gargoyle becomes a mere broken statue.

"Co reco co re.""Core nano desu~."

Is that a core retrieval song? While listening to the mysterious song, I watch over  Tama who's singing with strange intonation and Pochi who's interluding her while both of them retrieving the core.
Just like the ants, low level monsters have small magic core with pale color. The price is most likely cheap too.

"Aye.", so she says while presenting the core. I put it in my pocket straight into the storage. And then we head back to the camp site.

Needless to say, the two didn't ask what was the [Something] that I forgot.

◇

Since I don't want to needlessly make Lulu and Mia worry, I only tell the gargoyle thing to Arisa and Liza.

And since the probability that the camp would get attacked when I go toward the magician is high, I decided not to do a late-night visit.
Although, even if I don't go there, I feel like the opponent will come here instead.

The night watch tonight will be in 3 shifts. The first are Liza and Arisa, the second are Pochi and Tama and the last are me, Mia and Lulu. They're alloted according to the potential of enemy search and fighting equally.
I'd be glad to have Lulu together with Arisa, but since I wouldn't know what to do with just me and the taciturn girl, I made her join us.

Pochi and Tama take position on the left and right of me who's lying on the sheet. We've been sleeping together since the time in Labyrinth. Although I didn't sleep at all since I was on guard at that time.

"Together~.""Nano desu~."
"Good night, Pochi, Tama."
"Aye~.""Nighty~."

I could hear Arisa grumbling from a distance, but since it's nothing much, I let it off. Lulu and Mia were at loss finding the place to sleep, but by Arisa's suggestion, they will be sleeping beside us. It's a bit crowded but since it's warm, it's nice.

I frantically try to retain my consciousness which was almost taken away by the comfortable warmth. There'll be 3 shifts of night watch, but since it's almost certain that there will be a night attack, I'll be careful not to sleep.
While watching the radar, I'm reading the book from the menu to prevent drowsiness. This is going to be a long night.

# 5-8. Shadow Stalker

*

Satou's here. It's nice to have handy tools, but relying too much on it made you unable to notice the oddness with your own eyes, thus unthinkable mistake happens.
This happens in daily life, work and even in another world.

◇

Just before Liza and Arisa's night watch duty is over, I see enemies on the map.
There are three monsters called Shadow Stalkers. Since I've never heard of it, I check their details. Level 12, it has [Physical Damage Halved], [Stamina Drain] as race specific skills, if I don't have any means to counter it they might become formidable enemies. It doesn't like they're undeads. Their speeds aren't that fast, but they would probably get here in 1 hour. The enemies probably have ran out of flying type monsters.

I'm arranging various things related to battle to be displayed from the menu.
And then I turn my view to my chest. I had thought that something has been pressuring my chest for a while but as it turn out, it's Pochi and Tama who climbed on my chest and stomach while letting out ,"Gude~", sounds, sleeping there lying on their bellies.
I place them on the sheet while being careful not to wake them, and get up.

"Ara? Master, are you doing yobai?"
[TLN: http://everything2.com/title/yobai]
"Are you having trouble sleeping? Master?"

Arisa, whose somehow being held on Liza's arms called me out. Liza is probably already sleepy, her voice is weak without power. I should let her sleep a little before the enemies get here.

"I'll change with you, so it's fine for you two to sleep."
"Is it okay? Isn't the next turn going to be Pochi and Tama?"
"I'll make the two do the watch duty together with Lulu in early morning."

Arisa ,whose free from Liza's hold is coming while saying, "Let me sleep on your laps~.", but I lift and roll her to beside Lulu. Arisa is probably tired too, without complaining she goes to sleep while using Lulu as a body pillow. Lulu's painful expression from being clung by Arisa is cute too. I'm almost taken over with wicked thought but I manage to forcibly shake it off.

I continue watching the map while adding twigs to the bonfire. It's still 50 minutes before the monsters arrive. Since back then, the monsters doesn't increase in number.

"...I'm thirsty."

Mia who has woken up hands me a water bottle. After I receive it she sits beside me while I'm drinking the water.

"Why?"

A small voice comes out of Mia. It doesn't seem to be a monologue.

"Why am I protecting you from the magician?"
"Yes."
"As you can see, there's nothing deep to it."

Likely not satisfied with my answer, she falls silent.

"It's dangerous."
"Looks like it, a lot of monsters did come out back in the afternoon."
"Mize and even the others... died."

Come to think of it, what's the relation between elves and the rat-men?

"The red-helmet(Mize)-san, do you know him from somewhere?"
"Forest."
"Bornean Forest?"
"Yes."

Connecting the story from the few words of Mia, it seems that the red-helmet was saved by Mia's parent when he was dying and surrounded by goblins outside the forest 10 years ago. The red-helmet then stayed in Mia's parent house for a while while being taught together with Mia various things by Mia's parent, so they became acquainted.
It seems that the red helmet he was wearing was a mithril product given by Mia's parent. So it exists, mithril huh.
The reason the red-helmet called Mia princess, was probably because of this.

"Did you get attacked by the magician when you're visiting Mize-san's hometown together with him?"
"No."

After asking her in several angles, I understood the rough situation.
Seems that Mia was abducted from her hometown on the forest by the magician, and held captive in a maze in a mountain. The magician then forcibly made her to be the "Master of Mazes" with a forced contract ceremony. Even if she's called master, she was nothing more than the proxy of the magician, she was forced to sit in the master room for half a day.
According to Mia, the maze's movement is weak, so she's probably some sort of a key or a catalyst.

"Did Mize-san come to help you on the maze?"
"A coincidence."

Mia denies while shaking her head. When I inquire for more details, it seems that she executed an emergency escape command on the Maze Core when there was a chance at the time the magician went back to his room. When I said "You know well", she said, "It's in elf language." Perhaps, she pushed something like a button written in elf language. And then she escaped to the Rat-men village and reunited with the red-helmet there.

"The village was burnt because of my fault."

Mia painfully said so. I hold her shoulder and say, "It's not your fault." to console her. In times like this anyone would want to be comforted even if it's just merely words of consolation.
The subordinates of the magician who came to look for Mia seemed to have burned down the village as a lesson. Those subordinates got disposed by the red helmet and his friends in a counterattack, but there were some villagers who fell victims. Hence, it was hard for her to stay in the village, so the red helmet with his subordinates were going to escort Mia to meet the elf in Seryuu city.
And then, when they were going down the mountain--

"We were attacked."
"By the flying ants right?"
"Yes."

From then on, it's probably the same as we have seen.

◇

Meanwhile, the shadow stalkers are stopping at the site where the flying ants were decimated by Arisa's uniques skills in the afternoon.

I should wake everyone soon.
I call Pochi while sending magic power to the Light Hot Plate.

"Pochi."

Pochi who's sleeping with Tama curling up like a ball is reacting with her ears twitching. Pochi is getting up while rubbing her eyes and looking so sleepy.

"Unyu~, food?"
"Not that, wake everyone up since I feel some presences from the forest."

Among these members, Pochi is the easiest to wake up. The one with the worst waking habit is Liza.

"It's not morning but wake up nodesu~."

She steps on Tama's stomach and knocks on Arisa's head with a whack. Lulu gets up hearing Pochi's voice.

"Liza wake up too nodesu."

Liza's body is swaying from the shaking but she's only groaning without waking up. Tama get on top of Liza's stomach to assist Pochi. However, while half-asleep, Liza catches the two and hugs them.

"Mugyu~.""Wake up~?"

Looks like the two will be like that until Liza wakes up.
Arisa is coming to the bonfire while yawning with her mouth wide open.

Lulu puts her hand in front of her mouth and begins yawning cutely.
Where is this difference in girl power coming from?

"Fuwaah~ is it enemies?"
"They're still far, but there are three coming."
"Judging from the atmosphere, they're not powerful."

I teach her about the enemies' types and characteristics.

"They're not undead right? Then they're easy preys with mind magic."

When she gets to the bonfire and sees Mia who is sitting besides me, Arisa does an exaggerated gesture by opening her eyes wide while saying, "What a fearful girl!". Who is she imitating?

"Hey wait, you have me if you want to do it with someone!"
"Stop saying those stupid things. I was just hearing her rough situations."
"Then why is she clinging to your arm?"

Come to think of it, Mia is clinging to my right arm before I knew it. I thought we were separated after I activated the light hot plate earlier.
Since I'm used to be hugged by Pochi and Tama, I didn't mind it.
Mia parts her hands after being pointed out by Arisa.

'"I didn't hug him."'
"She didn't hug me she says."
"That's a lie! I saw you separating just now."
'"It must be a mistake."'
"If you're an adult, don't fuss too much over it."
"Gunununu~."

I receive a cup of tea from Lulu who's handing it. Am I thinking too much for seeing Mia who casually sits beside me after getting the tea?

"Liza, here nano desu."
"Nya, my tail hurts~."

Following the two, Liza has woken up.
I wonder if Pochi and Tama dislike tea, they're drinking plain boiled waters that Lulu had put. By the way, Tama can drink hot water just fine. She drank soup just fine too.

"Liza, it's about time to wake up."

I said so to her, and her loosened face began to rapidly tighten. After confirming me visually, to keep up her appearance, she greets me with composed face.

"G, good morning, master."
"Good morning."

It's not morning though.
I should make them get ready soon.

"Enemies are closing in. Wash your face and keep awake."

Everyone begin the preparation, only Tama who keeps staring at the top of a tree. There aren't enemies there according to the radar.

"Is there something over there?"
"Those birds, weird~?"

Birds?
There are around 20 owls nesting there. It's certainly a bit scary.

◇

It seems that the shadow stalkers have noticed the bonfire, they're enclosing in to this camping ground. They're at the other side of the owls' tree.

The three beastkin girls are in charge of the middle. Arisa will deal with the enemis on the right. Me and Mia are left to deal with the enemies on the left. Lulu is taking refuge in the wagon for safety.

I'm hearing fluttering sounds from behind.
Is it the owl earlier?

I look back for a bit to confirm it.
It is really an owl from earlier. It has a single red head-feather as its characteristic. Since the place where the owl landed is the place where we buried the boar remain for dinner earlier, it's probably attracted to the smell.
I'm convinced with that and look back to the front.

Right at that time, a red dot indicating an enemy suddenly appears on the radar--- Furthermore, it's at point blank range.

# 5-9. Shadow and Magician

*

Satou's here. The one who's weak to horror movie, Satou.

I'm fine with ghost or apparition, but I'm scared with faces of the characters who got into spasms in terror.

◇

The enemy who suddenly springs up comes from the direction of the owl just before.
Appearing from the stretched shadow behind the owl, it's a figure of a person wearing black robe. I can't see its face because its wearing a hood and long sleeves.

"I've come to pick you, Mia."

Mia who's beside me is trembling.

"...No."

This man with the bent back is, without a doubt, the magician. The owl from earlier is nesting on the man's shoulder. Is it a pet or a familiar?

I put myself to protect Mia behind me, and check on his status. His name is Zen, level is high at 41. Skill is--- [Unknown].

This unpleasant feeling, is he the same kind as Arisa and the heroes? While agitated I continue to read his status--- What is this?! Skill [Unknown] also appears there.

Mia is trembling behind me.
I can roughly understand the details. This guy is too dangerous for anyone but me. Let's deal with him carefully. It seems impossible, but I'd like to settle this with discussion if possible.

"Nice to meet you, magician-dono. I'm Satou, a merchant."
"I don't have business with someone like a merchant."

The magician doesn't seem like he'd even bother to introduce himself.
I wonder if it's because he looks down on merchants or he just has low communication skill.

"Even if you don't, I have a duty to protect this girl. I won't pass her to a suspicious man."
"Fumu, you seem to be protected by generous and skillful mercenaries, but if they stand before me it will become a bloodbath, do you understand?"

The magician points his cane here while keeping his back bent.

"It's no good! Master, this guy is too strong."

Arisa warned me from behind.

"I am the great King of Night. It's good that you know your place, but trashes don't have any place to call me 'this guy'."

This is bad, the magician's attention is directed toward Arisa.

"■■■■ ■——"

The magician begins to chant magic toward Arisa.

I don't want to leave Mia, but I can't afford not to now. I rush toward the

magician, and strike his stomach with my fist.
But the strike is unable to stop the magician's chant. My fist has penetrated the magician's robe, but there is no response at all. Is it this guy's unique skill?

"---Shadow Whip."

When the magician finishes his chant, shadow stretches from his foot to form something that look like a spear that plunge toward Arisa. Is that the shadow whip?
I'm back stepping away from the magician, and I cut myself between the shadow whip and Arisa.

I block the shadow whip with my whole body. The shadow whip coils around my body, at that time I feel some small pricks.

>[Shadow Magic Skill Acquired]
>[Shadow Resistance Skill Acquired]

What do you mean with shadow resistance.
Ah, it's been a while since my scientific blood denies the fantasy.

But I'm profiting from this trouble.
I feel like the resistance skill will be of small importance in this situation, but let's increase the chance to protect Mia even if only a little.
I allocate points to shadow resistance and activate it.

◇

"Fumu, that's an unbelievable body. Are you really a merchant?"
"A friend of mine calls me nimble merchant."

From behind our conversation, I can hear Arisa whimper.

"It's useless, it really didn't work."

Did Arisa counterattack when the magician started to chant? Her magic power decreased for a bit. There is absolutely no change to the magician, he probably has resistance.

"To put yourself in front of a woman to protect them from my attack, you have my praise."
"If you admire me then won't you back down?"
"That's a different story. Mia is needed to achieve my goal."

I'm finally able to free myself from the shadow whip. This shadow whip only gives me insignificant prickly damages but it had no substance and no reaction so I couldn't tear it off. Yet it could be used to restrain thing, some fantasy substance it is.

"What is your goal?"
"There is no meaning to tell you that. If you want to save Mia, then bring a hero along."
"Do you have some grudges on heroes?"

The magician doesn't answer and laughs loudly while looking up the sky. Accompanying his laughter, countless shadow whips appear from his feet. Does the spell earlier retain its effect?

It's going to abduct Mia who stands listlessly. If physical attack isn't working then how about magic attack.
I take out magic guns from the pocket, equip them on both hands, and set the power scale to the MAX.
For someone of this guy's level, this much probably won't kill him.

"There is a limit even for facades."

Following the magician's word, the magic whips expand toward me and Mia.
I intercept the shadow whips with the magic guns. Dual wielding guns feels like a chuunibyou from somewhere, I don't like it.

It's working.
I succeeded in destroying every magic whips that had went toward Mia, while I let the one that came toward me to coil itself on me. I wasn't able to destroy them all as expected.

"Those are quite good weapons."
"Is that so? If you leave Mia alone then I will give you one, how about it?"

While offering the trade to the magician, I smash the shadow whip coiling my body with the magic guns.
I hear Mia's short scream from behind.

I turn just my head, Mia is being restricted by shadow appearing from her feet.
More shadow whips appear from the magician and restrict me.
The magician begins to chant a new magic.

I can't let him casts more magic than this, I fire the magic guns to the magician. His health decreases but immediately recovers before the next shot. Is this guy's unique skill invincibility?
I change my aim to the cane, and fire the magic bullet.

"Help me nodesu!" "Help~?"

Pochi and Tama seemed to try to do something to the shadow whips but they slipped through it. Even just slipping through the shadow whip seems to give them damage, the two jump back while screaming.
Liza and Arisa are looking here from a cover while waiting for their

chance and eluding the magic whips.

All the magic bullets that I fire are blocked by the shadow whips that appear from the magician's feet.
Then, finally the magician's magic, [Shadow Portal], is activated.

Mia's body is sinking into the shadow.
I give up on shooting the magician, and hold Mia's upper body from sinking with brute force.

"I'll have you return this girl. Since it'd trouble me if you're careless, I'll say this, if you try to forcibly pull her, Mia's life will be no more."

The magician is sinking into shadow too. I still can't see his face.

"You are no match for a transcendent being like me, resign from your unreasonable struggle. If you wish for death then you're free to visit my maze, I expect a show of courage and wisdom to break through it."

The magician disappears into the shadow while laughing loudly. He didn't see through Mia's sinking until the end, is it because he has allowance to do so or because of carelessness.

My body is almost dragged into the shadow too, but maybe because of my resistance, it stops at 1 cm deep.
The pulling power of the shadow for Mia is strong. My pulling power is even stronger, but Mia's health gradually decreases. If I put more power than this, Mia's body would break.

I have decided.

"Arisa! When morning comes, go ask for assistance at the worker's guild manager."

After telling her that, I let myself sink into the shadow with Mia.

Arisa and the girls should be able to deal with the shadow stalkers somehow. If possible without injuries I hope.
That manager is unreliable but this time it's a crisis of a person from his tribe, Nadi-san should be able to arrange for it.

◇

After I'm sunk, there is only jet black space around.
There is no sound or light, it truly feels like inside shadow. Of course there is no air too.
It is indeed a bit painful. My health decrease faster than from the coiling shadow whip. Still, probably thanks to self-healing, it comes back up at fixed interval. Perhaps, I've become unable to die by suffocation.

Even with air, a person would go mad if they spend too long in this place.

Thanks to the lack of oxygen, I can't concentrate well.

Yes, how about Mia.
Since I can't even look at my own body, it goes without saying that I can't see her either.

I take out Light Drop from Storage and pour it magic power.
I thought that I could see my body then but it didn't work. The radar shows only me too.
I use [All Map Exploration] after a long time of not using it. But unfortunately, radar display remains as it is. It might really be only me around.

I open the map and see it.

There, something is written-- [It's an area with no map].

"What's this a game!"

I retorted.

And then, as if the voice is echoing back to back, the shadow space with no sound is breaking, like a glass, vanishing into fragments.
[TLN: We Majin Buu now lol]

◇

I'm in a place like the one nobles use to have audiences with people. It's a vertical room, like a school gymnasium cut in half. The floors are made of stones, fat circular stone pillars are lined up along the wall, and candlesticks attached to the wall are emitting LED-like magical lights. There's a throne in the furthermost of the interior, and in that interior a sphere 2 meter big in diameter is blinking rainbow lights while floating at knee-high height.

Mia who is made to sleep is sitting on the throne. Beside her, an unknown beautiful blond woman is nursing her. Her face looks exactly like Mia, but her breasts are outrageously big. No, such thing doesn't matter now.

The magician who is running his fingers through something that looks like a music stand beside the throne notices me, before I could rush to him.

"Absurd!"

Even while surprised, the guy is not loosening his fingers from playing the music stand.

"Yes, absurd! How did you escape from my prison of shadow!  It's something that shouldn't be broken by a group of low level people like you bastards."

Are you surprised, boasting or looking down, be clear about it.
My feet are a bit unstable, I wonder if it's the effect from the shadow space earlier.

"I have a light amulet with me. Shadow magic isn't going to work."

Oops, I wasn't going to tell him the true reason but even for deceiving him the detail was too appropriate. Is it thanks to deception skill?

"I see, I cannot permit unfairness. This room is only allowed for people who have captured the maze, those who earn it can come here, that's the rule."

The magician stops there, and nods to his own words.

"And then, the hero who is able to get here, is the one who is qualified to annihilate me, the King of Immortal."

What is this guy saying?
Capture the maze, does he want to kill himself?
Furthermore, didn't he say that he's a King of Night initially? He can't decide the name for himself.

But, rather than that, I feel slightly mad at this guy's excuse. He got our girls and Mia in trouble for such reason?

"If you want to die then go do it yourself. Don't involve other people."
"Fuhahaha, I have received blessing from the god, I am immortal."

It's unpleasant, but if I continue this stupid talk, my feet will recover

soon.
But, the other guy doesn't seem like he intend to continue.

"Well then, I'll have you leave from the master room."

The door located beside the throne is opening and then--

# 5-10. Maze of Trazayuya

*

Satou's here. When I was in grade school, I love the free time to play during the school athletic festival.
When I became an adult, I occasionally went to fitness clubs to move my body, but in this world, I wonder if there are facilities that provide you place to safely forge your body?

◇

Right now I am falling.

I had prepared myself for the enemies when the door beside the throne was opening, but instead, the one who came out was a beautiful woman who looked exactly like the woman who was caring for Mia.

Right when I was distracted with that, they activated the true mechanism to reject me out of the master room.
The entire floor disappeared. To make the entire room into a pitfall, even a death trap has its limit. No, the trap discovery skill didn't activate so it might have been an impromptu trap.

I don't think that I'd die even at the current falling speed but I'd hate it if I'm sunk deeply into the ground without any mean to get out.
Maybe I should stick some things on the wall to decrease this speed, like often seen in manga.
I take out a sledgehammer from the Storage and kick it strongly, the reaction force makes me collide with the wall on the opposite side. The wall is soft and smooth, there is no place for gripping.

I take out a great black iron sword from the storage and stab it into the

wall. With a screeching sounds, my falling speed gradually decreases. My wrist hurts a little.
After I reached a certain speed, the great sword, seemingly hit its limit, breaks.

I fell into a water body on the bottom of the hole before I could take out another great sword.

I experienced only little shock since I arranged my feet to make my fall straight
I sunk considerably deep but since the velocity was quite reduced, I didn't hit the bottom.

While swimming up to get to the water surface, I execute [All Map Exploration] magic.

The map displays [Maze of Trazayuya].
The maze consists of 20 levels with each having 500 meters diameter. It's pretty small compared to the labyrinth in the labyrinth city. According to the book that I've read, there are at least 200 floors that has been explored there, with more to come. Furthermore, each floor is several kilometers wide, so this one is quite obviously smaller.
Moreover, most passages are systemically perpendicular. It's exactly a maze. While the demon's labyrinth felt kind of biological, this maze feels systematic or rather, artificially made.

I finally get my face out of the water.
The place that I've fallen into is blocked off by stone walls. I could see a few mosses growing on the stone walls. According to the map, the 20th level is 300 meter above.
Looks like this level is modeled like the outside.

From what I see on the map, there is no enemy here.
The exit is two kilometers to the west. A bit further to the east, there's a

hidden door called [Room of Trazayuya]. Judging from the name, it's probably the room where the secret of this maze is sleeping, though since I already know the route, it's probably unneeded.

....No, I cannot deceive myself.

I really want to save Mia as soon as possible but I'm curious with that Trazayuya room too. It might be just a simple intuition, but I feel like I must go there.

I apologize to Mia in my heart and begin dashing to the hidden door.

It's hard to swim because of my clothes. Particularly my boots, it's hard to kick the water because of it.
Since no one sees me, I put my clothes inside the storage. I discovered that I could directly put what I wear into the storage.

◇

The hidden door is protected by the same kind of riddle from the labyrinth of demon on Seryuu city but thanks to DeRiddle skill, I easily get through it.

The hidden door is letting out moldy smells. The walls and the floors aren't made of stones but resin-like materials.
This looks like someone's research room. It's fully equipped with dining room, bathroom and bedroom. From the accumulated dust, the magician (Zen) have probably never come to this room.
I'm fascinated with the tub on the bathroom, but this isn't a situation where I could casually take a bath.

There are many books and memo in this research lab. I don't know how

many yeas has passed for the books, but most books beside the magic books have deteriorated really badly so I put them inside the menu to read from there.

I already have a guess it from the maze's name, but it's said that the creator of this maze is called Trazayuya. He is an elf. Moreover, it seems that he's from the same hometown as Mia.
All the books are written in elf language. If I didn't get the language from the red helmet, I wouldn't be able to read them at all.

There are some places where the inks are blurred, but I could roughly read it. It seems that this maze was made by Trayazuya-shi and the elves for the sake of "Safety", mimicking the labyrinth's function.
The memo tells about the guy's anguish, or rather, his over-protectiveness for his tribe.

'We, the elves, have weak attachment to life. When faced with desperate situation, we don't struggle much compared to other tribes. Because of this, a lot of our younger generations died in the labyrinth. This maze is made as an absolute necessity for when the elves need to flee from dangers to safety.'

Others details are like, how the maze has something called Maze Core not unlike Labyrinth Core, although it cannot grow up like a labyrinth, but it sucks up magic power from its surrounding and refines it into magic cores just like a labyrinth.

And then I found some disturbing words.

'The facilities to make artificial monsters by inserting magic cores into existing creatures on cultivation tanks have been completed.'

Are monsters originally normal creatures?
Certainly the monsters that I've fought up until now are all looking like

deformed normal creatures. Since Wagahai-kun was a demon, that particular one is probably entirely different.
After thinking about that, I feel a bit reluctance in drinking potions which are made from magic cores.

Let's get back on track. I'll think about that later.

Trazayuya-shi has made three prototyping facilities. A facility to cultivate monsters. A facility that produce golems. And a facility to create dolls that would serve people.
However, since he earned the cooperation from the rat-men community nearby, he abandoned the last one.

Suddenly, I'm interested with what the monsters who live here are eating. I wonder if they cannibalize each other or if there are feeder monsters being produced?

Even after the maze was completed, the other elves didn't come here. There is one thing at the end of his note.

'No one would forget my failure in just 100 years. My life will soon end. This maze will be sealed until my countrymen need it in the future. I believe that the day where the elves lead the world once again will come--- Trazayuya Bornean.'

[TLN: I'm normalizing the elf forest's name to Bornean, since it probably comes from 'Borneo'.]

I see, so this is why Mia is needed. Still, the magician is good to have known how to solve the seal without reading this note.

I have obtained various informations but I have not gained the way to save Mia.
I'm a bit worried with a scribbling that read, "Explosions are romance!", but there probably aren't any idiots who would make self-destruction mechanism in a facility that was made for safety.

Since there doesn't seem to be any way to get back to the main level from this one, I decided to get out of the maze from one end and search for the main entrance.

I continue through the road from the underground lake that I had fallen into to the exit. I can't run since it's narrow with stalactites poking out here and there. Flowing water from the underground lakes are dripping from the stalactites.

While minding as not to step aquatic creatures that look like salamanders, I continue walking to the exit.

◇

The exit is on a vertical cliff 5 meters above the ground.
I try confirming my location on the map but since I'm in an unexplored area, I perform [All Map Exploration] magic.
This here is [Ash Rats Principality]. It's five mountains away from the highway that we had traveled. It seems there is a rat-men community about one mountain away from here. Even though it's called principality, the village only has around 1000 people.

The entrance of the maze is located near the summit of this mountain.

Since it's a bit dark, I take out the Light Drop to light the surrounding.
I can't find decent footholds.

It can't be helped, I jump down 5 meters to the ground.

I feel something not right when I look around.
I had thought that it was because right now is early winter, but it's too

strange that there aren't even any sounds of insects. Most trees have their leaves fallen, and even among the fallen leaves, most of them are withered.
I have always call them another world tree, but the AR displays that they are called Shiiya trees. Even evergreen trees can have their leaves fall.

I'm bothered with them, but right now my top priority is to get to the maze's entrance.

◇

I run up the mountain. Since the underbrushes have withered, there aren't many obstacles.

Along the way, from the radar, I caught sight of a big tree on the mountainside.
It's not in red, but it's a level 20 fairy tribe. I wonder if it's a trent?

If I continue to run on this course, I would get near it, but since I could just escape even if it turn out to be hostile, I continue on.

When I run on the side of that tree, the log displays [Resisted charm effect].

On the base of the tree... There's a big-breasted older sister in nurse outfit.

No well, I do like nurse outift.
But think about the TPO even if you're an illusion.

"Excuse me, o young gentleman over there."

Moreover, her speech style is from the historical drama.
The AR indicates that it's a Dryad. Level 21. It's a tribe with charm and illusion skills.

"Do you have to be so hasty in the middle of the night?  If you don't mind, how about a cup of sake?"

The girl points to a red table and chairs that appeared out of nowhere, filled with sake and foods on top.
Rather than dryad, I feel like being fooled by a fox.

The dryad approached me and took my arm when I was distracted with the table. I feel something soft on my arm.
I'm almost tempted to enjoy the poyonpoyon while drinking, but I mustn't forget about Mia.

"I'm sorry but I don't have any time to accompany you, if you have a business then can you please say it quick?"

After I said so, the illusion disappears, and a girl with green long hair that touch her feet appears, in bare skin. She looks to be around 12-13 years old I guess? So the feeling earlier was an illusion too, her actual figure is quite modest. Since I can't be turned on with that, I'd like you to cover yourself. Be more modest please.
Her expression has changed from the bewitching one earlier to stern. It's the face of a child whose not used to being angry so there is no force to it.

"Become mine, human!"
"I'm sorry, but how about proposing again in 7-8 years?"
"No, become my meal!"

The girl says that all kind of trees here has died for several months making the animals disappear. Furthermore, the earth veins on the mountain were cut off recently so she is dying.

It's most likely the fault of the [Maze of Trazayuya].

"This is because you humans sucked the mountain's nourishment."
"I could give you a bit of my health and magic, but I cannot allow you to eat me."

Seems that I went easy because the opponent looks like a child.

"If you give me your magic then I'll eat it."
"That's good."

I let her sucks my MP. I had thought that it would be like vampire sucking from the neck but turned out that it's directly from the mouth. Frankly speaking, it's a kiss.
Kissing a young naked girl, I can't let my acquaintances see this.

The girl was satisfied after sucking 300 MP.
After that, I arrived at the maze's entrance without any particular problem.

# 5-11. Maze of Trazayuya (2)

*

Satou's here. When I was a child, I was good at solving the maze quiz that appeared on the corner of newspapers.
When I became an adult, the only experience involving maze that I had was from the one on theme parks.

◇

The maze's entrance is a tower of about one and half meters high. The tower is hidden by the vegetations, so ones wouldn't find it if they didn't know about it in the first place.
There are some traces of people going in and out, but even those are few.
According to the map, there's a back door used for monsters to go in and out.

I open the door and go inside the tower. It's carelessly not locked.
I was contemplating to wear the silver mask before I went in, but since the magician is the same kind as Arisa, he probably had seen my name.
Since it's better that silver mask = Satou is not known, let's not transform into the silver mask this time.

I look up the enemies information inside the maze to prepare the necessary weapons. The majority of them are flying ants at level 5-8, and skeletons are at level 1-3. The slightly stronger ones are the level 18 bone golems and the level 15 wood golems.
The other curious ones are like slime-based enemies and homonculus, but they're small fries at level 5.
It's just that, I'm a bit interested with the [Nature Art] that the homonculus have. What kind of skill is that? Is it the same kind as Nature Magic?

If the situations allow, I'd like Liza and the girls to learn it.

The high level ones are the iron golem located in a large room in the center of the maz, and the magician in the master room.

My equipment will be a saber rather than a shield, and a submachine-gun-like magic gun. I'm not using the usual magic gun since this one seems to be stronger.

Actually, this is a high performance gun that could fire 50 bullets per second when charged with magic power once, but since it needs 10 minutes cool down once it fire all the bullets at once, I haven't used it until now.
For this occasion, I choose to use [Scatter] shoot mode since I don't have to worry with friendly fires. Even though the power is lower than usual, it's enough for fighting the small fries.

I put on the overcoat that I took off when I feel into the lake. It's different from what I wear just now, it's thick but cheap thing I've bought on the east district of Seryuu city. This is good enough for the blood of my victims.

I go down the spiral stairs while straightening my equipment.

◇

I've entered the maze after I got out of the stairs.
The ground is different from the resin-like thing on the underground, but although it looks like stone pavement, it somehow feels like plants. The visibility is good since lights are leaking through the crevices on the floorboards.
This is good since I don't have torches like when I was in the labyrinth.

I could hear some light metal clang-clang sounds from somewhere, although I don't know what kind of thing could produces that sounds. Since I still don't understand even after listening to it carefully, I decided to put it in the corner of my mind.

Since I have no intention of fighting steadily, I look up for the shortest route to the master room.

I kick and destroy the skeletons that I meet, and throw bones on any flying ants who come up, eliminating them.
Even though I've prepared a nice gun, it didn't get any turn at all.

Still, this skeleton's skull is not that of human. It's probably from rat-man tribes.

This maze isn't like the one typically in a game where you go to lower level every time you clear a level. Rather, the blocks are connected in three-dimensional formations and you might go up and down in complex structures.

Even on this stair I'm descending right now the wall-like object isn't touchable making it feels like a trompe l'oeil making me unsure whether I'm descending or ascending.

This is like a theme park somehow.

While thinking about that, a skeleton that I kicked left out a big magic core. Since the magic core got out in bare, I pick it up. It's impossible to do it for the ants.
I thought that it's strange so I checked on the log, it turns out that the thing that I just defeated was a bone golem not a skeleton. The level difference is 6, but it didn't feel different from the other small fries.

The enemies resistances are weak, I'm advancing through the trap smoothly too, however the road becomes dead end in front of me.
According to the marker, there should be a path here though?

I check on the map, it's certainly a dead end here.
After double-checking, I understood that this maze is changing its joints with the passage of time. The sounds that I occasionally heard signified the changing of its joints.

What a uselessly amazing gimmick. It's something that even modern science would be hard-pressed to reproduce in a way.

I continue advancing the maze while checking the map whenever I hear the sounds.
Since I was running while minding the map, I'm plunging into a passage where a lot of slimes gathered.
It's finally the turn for the rapid-fire magic gun. They all die in just 3 burst, but the ground becomes slimy it's disgusting.

◇

I've finally arrived at the large room in the center. This place is unmoving, serving as the halfway point. It's 5 meter high and 20 meter wide here.

When I got into the room, the door automatically closes and the magic formation on the center begins to shine.
An Iron Golem pushes out of the magic cirlce. Beside it, a beautiful blond woman like the one in the master room stands. This golem is fastened with rivets, looking like a pre-war thing.
I see now, this girl is a homonculus. That explains why there are several people with the same faces. Judging from their faces, I wonder if Mia is

the base?

I change the rapid-fire gun mode from scatter to convergence.
The iron golem is close to 4 meter high. There are the same letters as the stone golem from the labyrinth on its forehead.

"You did good to have come this far, explorer-dono."

It's an easy-to-listen charming voice even in this situation. Though she's speaking in monotone so it breaks the immersion.

"I'm a merchant though."
"Merchant? ...O explorer!  You did well to come here."

After looking puzzled while tilting her head, she tilted it back and continue to talk. She's moving like a doll.
You're insisting me to be an explorer huh.

"I'll give the excellent you the right to fight the guardian. If you could beat the guardian, I'll admit that you have the qualification to advance ahead. The winner will be given a reward from the master of the maze."

She was still speaking in monotone. It feels like in an elementary school festival.
The beautiful woman doesn't mind the unamused me and continues the talk, following the scenario.

"Now, let the fight begin. O iron giant, there is no need to hold back."

The woman gets to the corner of the room after finishing her long speech. Her face looks satisfied, or rather, proud.

After the woman got to the corner of the room, the iron golem starts moving.

I pierce the character on the golem's forehead with the rapid-fire magic gun. Changing [EMETH] to [METH] by destroying the [E]. The golem stops moving as according to the anecdote. Yes, like the anecdote from our world.

Probably not expecting this to end in an instant, the beautiful woman on the corner falls into confusion.
I ignore the woman and head toward the exit.

"You're careless!"

The beautiful woman attack with a rapier from behind while talking in monotone. It looks like she used some kind of reinforcing magic, her stab is reasonably faster than her level tells.
While being careful as not to break the woman's hand, I stop the rapier.

"Come to think of it, what is the reward for the winner anyway?"
"...Me?"

She tilted her head like before, and said so after hesitated for a bit. Why is it a question.

Apparently she didn't prepare any reward since she didn't think that I would win.
I make the woman faints, and take the rapier as the reward. Since the hilt design is cute, let's give it to Lulu or Zena-san as a present.

I lay the woman on the floor and advance ahead.

◇

Afterward, I arrived at the master room without any considerable setback.

The latter half had traps, but since I avoided all of them with trap discovery skill, I didn't even know what kind of traps there were.

The magician is in the interior of the master room. There's Mia on the throne, but she seems to be still unconscious. Her HP has fully recovered, but her stamina is still only at about 30%.

"I really did not think that you would come this far so fast."
"Is that so? If possible I'd like to avoid fighting and just get Mia back."

The magician laughs.
I continue to step forward to the throne while talking. I'd rather not get thrown again into the underground lake if I ignore the magician.

"Impossible, that's impossible. You have shown your qualification by defeating the iron giant."

The magician's solo performance continues.

"However, your title is insufficient to go against me. I'll have you fight formidable adversaries so you could gain the title 'Hero'. As for your reward, I'll give you this holy sword, Gjallarhorn."

The magician pull the sword on his hand.
The AR indicates that the sword is a holy sword, Gjallarhorn. Its performance is inferior compared to the holy swords I have, but it's still incomparable to common magic swords.

I don't understand this guy's real intention.
Does he really only want to commit suicide?

"Your opponents are them."

The magician's shadow expands to the center of the room as he speaks. And then, 3 iron golems appear from the shadow. Moreover, five beautiful women come out from the door beside the throne and line up behind the golems. Their faces are the same as the beautiful woman earlier, but since their hairstyles are different, they're probably not the same person.

"However, you would merely get killed by strong enemies like this, while the title hero is attained by overcoming life-and-death struggles."

From this guy's viewpoint, my level is 10. It shouldn't be possible to beat 3 level 30 golems.
The magician spreads his hands toward the heaven and continues his words.

"Therefore, I'll give everyone the blessing of my god--- Limit Break."

# 5-12. Maze of Trazayuya (3)

*

Satou's here. As I have always lived in the gluttonous Japan, I've never starved.
The wartime story in the olden days told by my great-grandmother felt like some kind of far away events.

◇

The purple aura gushing out from the magician not only wraps the women and the golems, but also me.

I check on the log for once, it seems that it was properly resisted. I didn't get the skill because it was probably a unique skill.

"Well then, I'm expecting a desperate struggle."

While saying so the magician runs his fingers on the maze core operation machine that looks like a music stand.
Walls come out to separate the throne from the hall in the master room.
From the map, it doesn't seem to be simple walls, but other blocks from the maze who have moved here.

I tilt my neck to avoid a magic arrow going straight to my face.
I look at where the arrow flew from, the former beautiful women who have turned into demonic figures are there. The golems which are coming here while flinging their arms around have the same atmosphere.
I could kill them instantly, but I'd use the golem to understand how the magician's unique skill works.

While dodging one, the other is coming.

While maintaining our distance, I concentrate firing the rapid-fire magic gun on a leg of the golem. The leg was destroyed after about 10 firings.
The third golem manages to body blow me. My HP is only decreased in a single digit although I don't know the exact value. Isn't it about as strong as wagahai-kun?
Its level is still 30, but did it get stronger equaling to twice its level?  I defeated the golem in the large room with one hit back then, so I can't compare these ones with it. I should've have fought it properly.
Still, if the unique skill only strengthen its recipients to double their level then it's nothing to worry about.

I ward off the next blow from the third golem and make it hit the second instead. The second golem's head is destroyed, but the third golem's fist which it used to hit the other golem also got destroyed.
I see, [Limit Break] is just as it says.

Using this opportunity, the former beautiful women are unleashing magic arrows in rapid successions. The magic arrows are being fired from magic circles that appear in front of their foreheads.
I properly avoid them, but it seems that they can persistently home in on the target. I don't think that I could avoid them forever so I shoot them down with the rapid-fire magic gun.

The 5 of them fired a lot. They sure have quite the MP to keep on it.

The second golem which got its head destroyed is still able to move. And then, it points both of its open hands to me.
Don't tell me.

Slightly different from my expectation, the golem fires all 10 of its fingers like missiles. I can effortlessly dodge those, but they explode when it got close to me.
Putting aside physical damage to my body, my clothes became tattered.

The magic arrows that was floating and aiming on the air are rushing to me, fired by the former beautiful women.

The golem which match its timing with the arrows attack approaches me with its fist. The first to reach is the fist.
Since I'm afraid the gun is affected by the explosion earlier, I'm not going to use it.

I jump on the golem fist and make it as foothold, but the arrows are going to hit me.

I unfasten my mantle with the quickdressing skill, and fling it to the nearby pillar to change my trajectory--

--I managed to evade the arrows and the fist.

The arrows pierced the golem but it only reduced its HP by less than 10%.
Even if they hit me, they'd only do little damage but I hate pain.

Rather than that, the former beautiful women's states are strange. How do I say it, their movements are now looking more like zombies than demons. They're saying something like "Uuu~", or "Aaa~", painfully so yet they keep shooting the magic arrows.

Since I'm worried with the condition of the women, I've decided to make quick works of the golems.
I throw fragments falling from the golem in super high speed. The golem is pulverized whole, don't even mention the letters on their foreheads.

While I'm throwing it, I see the figures of the former beautiful women being ruined in typical fashions.
While bleeding from their eyes and pores, they're unleashing giant magic arrows, no, spears from magic circles in front of their whole bodies.
If I don't quickly stun them, they would really die.

I impatiently fix my posture and face toward the women.
However, it was too late.

As the magic spears unleashes upon me, the women's lives also disappear. When their HP gauges became zero, their life burst over like some kind of game characters.

I do not take evasive action against the five spears and let them pierce my body.

It hurts.

"Why did you go that far."

I don't know if the girls', who were artificial life forms, senses of life were the same as me, but it's sorrowful.
If I think about the meaning the magic arrows which were too many then...

I destroy the remaining two golems who were approaching by using the fragment of the first golem.
Both the golem and homonculus are artificially made, but since the golems looks like robots, I didn't hesitate in destroying them. Deep inside, I probably perceive golems as machines and homonculus as humans.

After all the enemies have been eliminated, the hall with me alone becomes once again connected with the throne on the master room.
I set the title as that guy desired.

◇

The magician's applause is echoing through the hall.

"That was splendid. Welcome, new hero."

The magician's shadow brings me the holy sword.
I can't see the face of the magician with bent back because of the rainbow colored light emitting from the maze core behind him.

"Is your purpose a hero?"
"Indeed."
"Then, couldn't you just go to the Saga empire without doing this roundabout charade?"

I asked with harsh voice. I've been shocked with the tragic deaths of the women, my heart has become restless.

"Fumu, Parion's hero eh. When I went there, the hero had been sent back home."
"Don't you know that there's a next generation?"
"Ah, so it's already that season eh. However, the time is not right."
"What do you mean?"
"You wouldn't understand even if I explain."

It seems that he won't answer.
While having the dialogue, I'm calming my heart down.

"Hey magician, do you really only want to die?"
"The right answer to that question should be no."
"I don't want to have a Zen dialogue."

Hearing that answer, the magician is laughing like a mad man.
Two purple lights lines are sipping through his hood.

"Kuhahaha, I see, so you're a comrade who has also come from the land

of the god."
"I don't know any such country."

No wait, I think ancient Japan has been called that a long time ago.

"Kakakaka, it's useless to put on false front, what did you pray, wish, and desire from the ruthless god?"
"I did not hope for anything."

I haven't even meet one.

"If there was one, then I had wished for a rest I guess?"

I wished hard for that one.

"Fuhahaha, such selflessness. Truly worthy to be a hero."
"You, what did you wish for?"

Yes, why is your race not human.

"Don't you know it? Don't you see it? Yes, I am the king of night, an immortal existence. What I wished from the omnipotent god was a body that won't die, a live without starvation, and power to strike back at unreasonable violence."
"So that's why you were born with that body..."

The magician shakes his head while spreading his arms horizontally.

"You're reading too far. The god had let me reincarnated in a body of a healthy baby. And arranged me to be raised by good parents who I could respect, and met a pure lovely spouse who was more than I deserved."

Then, why?

"I became too accustomed with my new life. Even though I was robbed by unreasonable violence in my previous life, in this life it was done differently."

The magician takes off his hood.

"I was prisoned by a noble who fell in love with my wife and executed under false charge. The first view that I saw when I was resurrected in this figure was the head of my whole family starting with my parents in front of the castle. And underneath them was my broken doll-like corpse of my wife..."

Tears aren't dripping on his white cheeks.
Purple flames are raging from his eyes sockets.

"Your pity is unnecessary. I changed the corpses of my whole family into undead, and along with the corpses of the people with the same circumstance as me, we bared our fangs toward the noble and completely destroyed everything."

There is no way for him to shed tears.
Because his figure is that of a white skeleton.

"I, who had completed my revenge, intended to depart to the next world where my wife is waiting. However, the blessing from the god cannot allow that. Even with the purification technique (Turn Undead), or with the holy sword that I got with much hardship, I wasn't able to die."

He said, "Truly god's blessing (curse)."

"Come now, hero. I've said all that need to be said. Stab me to bring my end! At the very least, kill me before even my heart turned into demon lord."

The magician Zen, no, Immortal King (No-Life King) Zen, said so.

[TLN: No-Life King is a direct katakana translation from the author so there's no other interpretation possible]

Accepting those words filled with insanity, I pull out the holy sword, Gjallarhorn.
It's a curious sword with drill-shaped edges.

I raise the sword as if praying, then stab No-Life King Zen with all my might.

"Kuha, kuhahaha. Ena, my other half of wings. I'm going to you now..."

Zen's body is destroyed by crumbling into dust.
The robe falls and spreads out on the ground.

I could faintly hear, "My gratitude", in the end.

>Title [No-Life King Slayer] acquired
>Title [Maze Traveler] acquired

# 5-13. Maze of Trazayuya (4)

*

Satou's here. Whenever I played a game for the first time I never skip any event until the end, maybe because my job was making games.
If the game is not to my liking, I didn't enjoy it until the end and went to dispose it on a second-hand store, Satou.

◇

"Kusukusukusu, it's a failure huh."
"Yup, a failure."

Two purple lights emerge from the crumbled remains of Zen.

"Goodbye, hero."
"This is your victory."

I reflexively cut those lights with the holy sword since I feel evil intent from them. However, the lights which had been scattered away gather themselves back and rise into the sky.

"Let's meet again."
"See you."

The lights penetrate the ceiling and disappear before long.

◇

Were those angels? I felt maliciousness from them though.

But, I don't have the leisure to think about it. Because--

『System Message. This maze will begin to enter into self-destruct sequence. The staff members and trainee are to escape immediately. I repeat』

---I heard that announcement.
I rush to Mia and make her who's still unconscious to drink magic potion with restorative effect. Since the medicine hasn't been tested, I give her one third at a time. She wakes up exactly with one bottle.

"Mia, do you recognize me?"
"...Onii-chan?"

I am not.
Mia's blurred eyes become focused.

"Here is?"
"The master room of Trazayuya Maze."

Hearing me, Mia hurriedly look for the magician.

"It's alright, he is no more. He won't show up in front of you anymore."
"Really?"
"Yes really."

This is not the time to have a carefree talk like this.

『The self-destruct sequence has been executed. The staff members and trainee are to escape immediately.』

I have to stop it quickly.

"Mia, can you stop this maze from self-destructing?"

"I'll try."

Mia unsteadily walks to the operation board.
She tries to operate something for a while, but then she shakes her head.

"Impossible."

She gave up fast.

After asking for more detail from Mia, it seems that every functions has been locked somehow. So it's helpless even for the maze's master.

I somehow know that this maze would explode if I destroy the maze core.
Let's bet on my physical strength and escape by running then.

I carry Mia who has given up and staring at the floor under my arm.

"This will be dangerous, so hold me tight."

Without looking at Mia who's nodding, I run.

◇

I'm running through the passage.

Running.

And running.

At first, Mia was screaming loudly but she falls into silent now. It seems that she has fainted.
I mow down skeletons or ants which came out from time to time and

continue to run. It's a bit tough to protect Mia from the falling debris.

We finally get to midway, the central room.

Inside the room, I take the still unconscious big-breasted beautiful woman (Homonculus) on my shoulder, on the opposite side where I hold Mia.

Even though I couldn't save her friends, I'll save one even for my own self-satisfaction.
I'm a hypocrite if I do say so myself.

Even after carrying more luggages, my speed isn't falling. It just becomes a bit hard to keep the balance.
I jump through the trompe l'oeil stair with one leap.

Okay, it's just 4 levels left.

When I got there, I could feel vibration and hear thick explosion sounds from the depth.

『System Message, the Subsystem has been activated. The Maze Core has lost its power to support facilities due to entering self-destruct sequence. This maze will self-destruct soon. The staff members and trainee are to escape immediately. I repeat』

While listening to that robotic voice, my feet aren't stopping.

Damn, if there's a subsystem, then couldn't we stop the self-destruct there?  If only the map has the control room written or something.

I'm feeling eerie vibration from my feet, maybe the collapse is starting.

3 levels left.

A block falls in front of my eyes.
Without losing my momentum, I kick the falling block and make it flies to the other side.

I couldn't keep Mia and the woman unhurt while doing that kind of acrobatic feat. I'll let you two drink as many potions as you want when we get out so please bear with it for now.

2 levels left.

An especially strong vibration occurs, and makes the passage's turn just ahead to cave-in.
I look back the opposite side, but the upper level has collapsed too, blocking the path.

And, the ceiling here is also collapsing.

I put Mia and the woman on the ground near my feet.

I hold the ceiling with both my hands, but the ceiling breaks facing my crushing power. I protect Mia and the woman from the falling fragments. Do we have no choice but to get buried like this?

A piece of the falling debris hits Mia. Mia's health decreases by 10%. The woman also only has 30% remaining.

『The trainee's health has decreased. In accordance to the top priority of training program, ejecting the trainee outside the maze. Other trainees are to be separated from the particular trainee as to not get dragged into the teleportation.』

Is this what the Trazayuya guy mean in his memo?

◇

The three of us succeeded escaping with the safety program for trainee (elf).
I'm apologizing for making fun of the over protectiveness inside my mind.

I make Mia to drink the homemade potion. I let the woman drinks one too while I'm at it. The AR shows that the woman only has No.7 on its name's row. She doesn't have an actual name huh.

I recognize this place but I'll check the map just to be sure. It's near the place where I got out of the Trazayuya maze master room.
I see a cliff with water strongly gushing out of it. That's probably water overflowing from the underground lake.
The water flow becomes weak while I look at it, so I jump to the cliff and check on the map.
There may be someone who needs help.

According to the map, the survivors are me and one other. Slime-kun lives on it seems. There's no other survivor huh.

But in just a moment, the slime's HP is exhausted.
Rest in peace.

Right at that time.

The log begins to flow with great speed.
This hasn't happened since the time with meteor shower.

I scroll through the loot on the log. "Defeated all enemies on the map" is written there. I see, so this is the condition to trigger <<Automatic Loot>>.

There is no [Source] thing this time.

I move all the new loot to Trazayuya Maze folder.
Most of them are the remains of monsters and broken machineries.
There are also several magic books, they're probably magician Zen's belonging right?

Since the vibration still continue, the collapse probably is still continuing, I go back to where Mia and the woman are.

>Title [Survivor] Acquired

# 5-14. Joining

*

Satou's here. I want riddle to be called mystery.
With this brutal adventure life, I'm saying goodbye to carefree sightseeing trip, Satou.
[TLN: If you haven't noticed, these "Satou's here" preludes will only get weirder lol]

◇

Zen, Zen, Zen huh, I was overwhelmed by his drive, and made to dance according to his plan. He was probably satisfied, but it was a real nuisance to get involved.

Still, even though I've murdered someone because of the course of the event, I don't feel any remorse. It's not just because of my high MND but probably also because his outer appearance was that of a skeleton and he looked happy in the end.

I pull myself together. First, let's check on Arisa and the girls' situation. It seems that Liza is a bit hurt but everyone is safe. They're not in the camping ground but already near Seryuu city.
Somehow they thought that, "When it's morning", meant that they should get to the worker's guild before morning. I meant to say, "Depart when it's morning", but it was difficult to complete it.

I could tell them my safety if we have cellphones, but it can't be helped if it doesn't exist. Let's look for something with the same function when we got to the royal capital and labyrinth city.

Now then, it'd be difficult to traverse through 5 mountains when it's this dark. Putting aside my physical strength, my mental state is weary. I want

to rest at least until dawn.

Should I take a rest until dawn here?

I've thought of heartless things, when I think about it, I remember that I shouldn't leave Arisa and the girls alone. If they, slaves they are, come back alone then wouldn't they be treated as escaped slaves?
The knight Soun who guards the front gate is a big hearted person, but I'm not sure if that applies to slaves and demi-humans too.

My health is already fully recovered, and my stamina is still at 90% anyway. I hate to think like an athlete, but let's psyche myself up.
Of course I'll also take Mia, who I'm carrying on my shoulder, and No.7 (homonculus) along. If I leave them here, they'd fall preys to wolves then there'd be no point in me saving them from the maze.

I wrap Mia and No.7 each in thick sheets. By chance, Mia now looks like at the time when she was first handed to me by the red-helmet.

>[Packing Skill Acquired]

I put Mia on top of No.7, and carry both of them on my arms. They call this, bridal carry. If I have common physical strength I'd be down in just a few minutes, but the me now could carry them for many hours without problem. When I try to walk, Mia almost slips out so I wrap one more mantle on the two to stabilize them.

I push my way through the mountain road while carrying the two.

◇

I haven't even run through the mountain road for a few minutes before,

like usual,

>[Off-Road Skill Acquired]

comes up, so I put points to it until the maximum and activate it. Incidentally, I also enable the [Sprint] skill in similar manner. I might be wasting points but there's still about 90% of it remaining so it's fine.

I've been thoughtlessly using them up until now, but seeing those purple lights, I feel like I'd get involved with troubles. I've decided to carefully examine each of my skills and use half of my points to strengthen myself after I've reunited with Arisa and the girls.

I'm passing over a place that looks like the ruins of rat-man village after 10 minutes of running. Was this the village where Mia met the red-helmet again?
I'm interested, but I have to keep going through the mountain now.

I can somehow identify good thickets to jump from, I wonder if this is thanks to off-road skill. I can't tell it as clearly as the trap-discovery skill could to traps, is this because the difference in natural and man-made things?
Probably thanks to the off-road skill added with sprint skill, I'm even considerably faster than a horse-drawn wagon. Moreover, combined with 3D-maneuver skill, I'm passing through the mountain almost in a straight line. I feel like some kind of ninja from a manga.

After crossing two mountains, dead trees begin to decrease and greeneries are becoming rich.

At such time, I see interesting place with shinning lily of the valley-like flowers and flickering mushrooms on the middle of the way. I want to look closer but time is precious now, so I give up. Since it's regrettable, I put a marker on the map for the place.

Mia and the woman sometimes get tangled with branches that stick out but I destroy it by flicking coins with my hand.
I run through the mountain relying on the moonlight. It feels like the moon in this world is awfully bright.

After the fourth mountain, a Giant Boar jumps on me. I've noticed it on the radar, but since it suddenly jumps here, I just kick it away.
I've been avoiding small animals who jump my way so far, but as expected, it's impossible to do so with a bear-sized giant boar.
Its head which got hit directly went with a splat, I averted my eyes.
Without looking at its scattered head, I put it into the storage before it falls onto the ground as a souvenir for Liza. Since I've seen Liza dismantling it several times already, I may have become accustomed it.
Even though I'm boasting now, I'm confident that I'd have abandoned it if it was not dark.

And then we finally get to the highway. From here, it's 80 kilometers away to Seryuu city in straight line. There's one and half hour until dawn.
I run pass the hilly areas in straight line. The grounds are scooped out but no one would mind it anyway, probably.

◇

I'm thinking while running. The thing with Arisa and Zen, I feel I have a luck (Hard Luck) that gets me tend to be involved with humans who have been given power by the gods. I can't think that they're all existences with good will.

Does the gods in this world enjoy themselves by giving people trial?
Or, are they like mythological gods from Northern Europe and Greece where they have human-like trait with both evil and good?
No, there's also possibility of devils pretending to be gods like in the

bible.

There's no answer with just just guessing. Later in our journey, let's look for more information about gods if I see a big temple or library.
Then I could compare the informations I got to Arisa's own.

Still, seeing this trend, there are other reincarnated people out there right? And even with them around, this world's culture and civilization didn't collapse huh.
Maybe the people who were chosen were like me, who actively does not intend to spread modern-world knowledge.
People who love conspiracy theory probably would say that the reincarnated person who's spreading modern-world knowledge would be removed by some kind of power.

Now then, the magician Zen said that he became No-Life King after he was executed by a noble.
What I'm worried about when I heard that story is my unique skill [Indestructible]. They sounds too similar. I'm afraid that I'd also become No-Life King or Demon Lord if my HP becomes zero.
[TLN: I translated it as Immortal back then, but it's more appropriate to be Indestructible so I'll change it for now. We'll see how the author play this out.]

Were the skills I saw from Zen in camping ground, like [Physical Attack Invalid] or [Instant Recovery] unique skills? Maybe it was because of those two skills that he wasn't able to kill himself.
This is only a guess from what I gathered from his talks, but [Hero] title combined with a holy sword are probably able to invalidate the two skills.
Perhaps the demon lord has the same requirement too, or am I just thinking too much?

However, in comparison I was able to completely annihilate the heavenly dragons and the dragon god without any title. The meteor shower might have the same effect as [Hero and holy sword], but I feel that conclusion is too light.

I think that the dragons may be existences that hunt the demon lords, but they may also be a race that specialize in attack. I'm not really satisfied with this, but until I get new informations, let's conclude that for now.

◇

While recollecting the things that I talked about with Zen, I remember to put my title back to [None]. While I'm at it, I also change my level on the Exchange tab. Since Arisa and Liza have leveled up, I also raise my level to 12.

The growth of Arisa and the girls are like these

Arisa.... Level 10=>12, Skills are omitted
Lulu... Level 2=>3, Skills are [Etiquette], [Marshalling(new)]
Liza... Level 13=>14, Skills are [Spear], [Thrusting], [Dismantling], [Cooking], [Heavy Blow(new)]
Pochi... Level 13=>14, Skills are [Short Sword], [Throwing], [Dismantling], [Enemy Search], [Shooting(new)]
Tama... Level 13=>14, Skills are [Short Sword], [Throwing], [Dismantling], [Collecting], [Enemy Search]

Lulu's new skill [Marshalling] is not bad, but I'd have loved if she learned [Cooking].
In a game, you could assign skill for party members but reality isn't so convenient.

Come to think of it, I have [Education] skill if I recall right.
Maybe I could teach intended skills with this? I'll work together with Lulu to try it next time.

◇

I'm looking at the map every 10 minutes, but there's still nothing but me in this highway. Arisa and the girls have arrived in front of the Seryuu city's gate.
I've done an impossible thing by getting to the place where I could see Seryu city in 40 minutes. I'd say that my speed was 120 KM/H in average. Since I lowered my speed when I reached highway as not to break them, you could guess yourself what my speed was on the hills.

When I got out of the last forest I began to walk normally since I could possibly be seen by the Seryuu city's scouts.
There are only 3 kilometers left anyway, and the gate isn't going to open for 50 minutes.

I came into a slightly elevated place 2 kilometers away from Seryuu city. I could not only see the outer wall from here, but also the entire gate. Our wagon can be seen in a distant.
While I look at it, the wagon starts to come toward here. Apparently, someone has seen me. The one with sharp eye, Tama I wonder?

The wagon comes into my view, Liza is operating it. Pochi and Tama lean out of the wagon as if they're about to fall and are waving at me. Arisa and Lulu are anxiously looking toward here, seems that they can't see me yet.
I put Mia and the woman on one of my arm smoothly, and then I wave back at them.
Still, everyone look strange. I've thought that they would worry about me but aren't they worrying too much?

Before long, the wagon comes into view while raising dust clouds.
I put the two on the side of the road and go to greet everyone.

The wagon makes a sudden stop, then Pochi and Tama who descend like they're tumbling down run here.
Bam, with that sound, Liza who jumps over Pochi and Tama from the coachman's seat runs here first. "Mafter", she says in a loud muffled cry while strongly hugging me. Losing her body weight, I support her center of gravity. Liza is crying like a flood while hugging me.
While I was surprised with Liza's unexpected behavior, Pochi and Tama climb up my body and Liza and hug me from both sides.

"Wlcome~""Nano desu!"

Maybe because they can't express their relief well, they're thoroughly play-biting my head and shoulders, and licking my face. This is intense.

Arisa and Lulu who come down from the wagon late aren't able to interrupt the intense hugs. "Welcome home.", said Arisa while looking at the ground, and said Lulu gracefully.

"I'm home, I'm sorry to worry you."

Liza is still crying while hugging me, but when she hears my voice she replies with a weak tearful voice. And then, seemingly aware that she's hugging me, she shyly parts away from me.
Matching her, I put Tama and Pochi on the ground and pat their heads.

"We were worried nodesu!""Any injury~?"

Pochi and Tama look at me worryingly, Lulu is looking at me while smiling, and then Arisa pushes to the front while still looking a bit at the ground.
She's not like the usual Arisa?

"...I, I was worried! Mou, promise me to never do something that absurd ever again!!"

Arisa resolves herself to raise her face and come up with words. Tears are swelling up on her large eyes.
I gently hug her while apologizing, and lightly pat her back.
She seemingly isn't able to hold back anymore, begins crying, and I comfort her. Maybe because they're swept away with it, Pochi and Tama also begin to cry together with Arisa. Lulu and Liza who look on us from a distance are also moved to tears.

I've decided to apologize for how many time, however many, until everyone stops crying. The pouring tears and scolding from everyone who was worried about me, warm my slightly hardened heart. And then, I continue to apologize until the sky turns white.

# 5-15. Joining (2)

*

Satou's here. It's not my intention to, but I can't help but lock on it when big breasts are presented in front of me.
Wanting a stout heart that won't lose to temptation, Satou's.

◇

I wonder if Arisa feels refreshed after crying her eyes out, she immediately asks me barrages of questions about my circumstance. I put aside the hard to talk things like about hero thing, or the purple lights, or reincarnated person and only roughly explain about how the magician has accomplished his goal and won't after Mia with the ants and monsters.

"Uuu~, you're hiding various things from me right?"
"Well yeah, I'll tell you about it when the time is right."

It's not exactly pleasant but it concerns Arisa too so I'll talk about it with her when it's only the two of us.

"Promise me! I'm fine doing it during our bed talk too."

It's good that she's back to her usual self.
I unwrap Mia and No.7 and put them on the wagon.

"Wait a minute, leaving aside the elf girl, what is this busty beautiful woman?  Tell me what you were you talking about with the magician~~~!"

Arisa's screams are echoing.

Since it likely would reach Seryuu city, I stop her.

"You understand right? The identity of this person!"

Arisa nods to my words. Since the woman's real nature is a homonculus. Mia finally wakes up from this uproar, and looks around unsteadily.

"...A dream?"
"It's not."
"Are we saved?"
"Narrowly, yes."

Mia's expression is changing while responding briefly. I tell to her what I told Arisa.

"I do not know the courtesy of humans. My mother who was with me for more than 100 years said that even though she didn't explain anything to me, I would understand that it's different when I go outside."

Oh, Mia is speaking with long sentences.

"If I may, a『Thank you』is enough. If the other person is a young man, then say it together with a laugh and a smile."

Arisa readily answers to Mia. Something isn't right though?

I see now, Mia was talking in Shiga kingdom language. When I ask her later, she's able to talk it right from the beginning. When I ask her why she didn't use it, I get the,『Human language make feels like I'm talking while clattering, I hate it』, nuance from her answer.

Mia stands up, corrects her appearance and bows politely.

"Thank you, Satou."

"You're welcome."

Come to think of it, this is the first time I'm thanked by Mia.
I reply back without making fun of it.

"Let me introduce myself once more. I am the youngest elf of Bornean forest, daughter of Lamisauya and Lilinatoa, Misanalia Bornean."

While saying, "You have my utmost gratitude.", she kisses my forehead.

>Title [Friend of the Elves] Acquired

[TLN: Yes, it seems to be different in the LN. This picture is actually located before Satou vs Zen, but heck, no more chapter to place this iirc.]

◇

"This woman is?"
"Oh yeah, I forgot about it. You got more woman again?"
"Master is filthy."
"Matter of course huh."

After the event with Mia ends, the topic returns to no.7.
Mia, Arisa, and Lulu are speaking like I'm a husband who's caught cheating.
I shake No.7 who faints looking so happy.

"...Good morning?"
"Yup, good morning. Do you understand the situation?"
"Please wait a moment."

She spoke without intonation like always. She's contemplating while tilting her head to one side, seems it's her habit.
Since Arisa who's nearby says, "Gross", I straighten her up.

"An instruction remains in the message queue. Since the previous master has died, My ownership has been resigned as a result. According to other records, you have the qualification to be the new master."

No.7 stops there and waits for my answer.
Well, I won't complain if a big-breasted beautiful woman become our companion. Her master, Zen, has died and there probably aren't anymore of her friends remain.

Before I can open my mouth, Arisa reacts first. "No, that's not how it is.", she says to No.7, pulls her behind the wagon and talks secretly with her.

"Master, please sit here~ Everyone else sit here~"

After that, I'm going along with Arisa's favorite small theatric play. It's a parody of some kind but I don't know what it is at all. Then, while I'm still confused, it becomes that No.7 calls me master while she gets [Nana] as her new name.

[TLN: Nana means seven, yes, Satou's terrible at naming people lol]

Although Arisa gives me a look when she heard the name, I'd like you to spare me on this since I don't have any naming sense.
I don't understand the meaning for the small drama until the end but No.7's title has changed from [Zen's Doll] to [Satou's Servant], so there might some kind of profound meaning to it.

"Please take care of me from now on, Nana."
"Yes, master. From now on, please treat me well."

...What did you teach this time, Arisa.

◇

After getting a new companion, I decided to take Mia to the manager of worker's guild. Mia has someone from the same tribe to rely on, unlike the other girls.

Since my deeds to stay in Seryuu city is still valid, I can enter the gate without tax. And since it doesn't seem possible for this to apply to other members, I go alone to call the manager.

"Hello, Nadi-san."
"Hello. Eh?  Satou-san, didn't you depart yesterday?"
"Yes, actually a lost elf child has fallen under my care, so I'm making a visit here thinking in borrowing the manager's help."
"You're a good person, you even come back for that."

Nadi-san greeted me pleasantly, but I feel like the last one is mixed with a bit of shock.

"The manager is still asleep, so I'll wake him for you. Please make yourself comfortable on this sofa while you wait."

While saying that, Nadi-san briskly cleans up menswear and magazine-like books on the sofa to make some spaces. They're most likely the manager's.
While I wait, I pick up a magazine-like book. It's a gossip magazine that cover Shiga kingdom related topic. There aren't more than 10 pages, but I flip through it since I feel nostalgic. Articles such as the outcome of love between a noble girl and an explorer somewhere, or map for 'service' on the royal capital are abundant.

I'm hearing the sound of Nadi-san who wakes the manager up from the floor above.
The two come downstairs when I'm reading an article about competition

of some famous fighters in an arena.

"I'm sorry to disturb you."
"...Where is she?"
"Mou, manager! When you talk to an ordinary person, please talk more properly. I'm sorry, Satou-san. Where is the elf girl?"

I thought that he was in bad mood for being woken up back then, but this guy is just taciturn huh. Maybe elves default character are taciturn?
I guide the two to the open space outside the gate where my wagon is waiting. The worker's guild wasn't put with [Closed] signboard or something, was that alright?

I ask Lulu who was in the coachman's stand to call Mia.

"Mia? I can't believe it, the lost child is Misanalia?"
"Yes, do you know her?"
"Ah."

He could speak fluently when he was speaking to himself but it's just a word for the reply huh? Nadi-san looks at the manager with troubled face. I see, I understand now why this guy is always sleeping in the store.

"Yuya?"
"Mia."
"Nn."
"Ran away?"
"No."
"Lost"No""
"Lia?"
"House."
"I see."
"Why?"
"...Cleaning up."

Their words exchanges in elf language are interesting. I can guess the intentions but I'd like an interpreter for the actual conversations. Mia only denies when it's about being lost, then they continue to mutually understand.
With the help of Nadi-san, I generally understand their conversations.
Manager(Yuya)-san is an elf who comes from the same hometown as Mia. He came to Seryuu city 10 years ago to clean up the mess that his granduncle had created. He didn't mention it, but it's most likely about the Trazayuya maze.
I report to him about the thing with the magician who kidnapped Mia. He had an underground hideout in the rat-man's territory which looks like a maze, and that when we escaped from it, the maze self-destructed burying it along with the magician.

"Go home?"
"Won't"
"I see."
"Have work to do."

Nadi-san became a bit anxious with the flows of the story, but she was back to be beaming with smiles after hearing the manager's words.

"What do?"
"Go home."
"Can you?"
"Together with Satou."

It seems that the manager asked if she could go back home, but Mia said that she'd be fine with me. Really, they could understand well with just that. If you're acquainted with someone for more than 100 years, I guess you'd end up understanding what each other is thinking.

Lastly, the manager tells me, "I'm counting on you". Then the manager

and Nadi-san
pulls us along when they're going back to their shop, and negotiate with the knight Soun to make ID for Mia. I consult with the two if they can do something to make Nana able to create an ID, and the manager says, "Leave it to me.", while using magic art, [Fake Patch], to camouflage Nana's tribe into [Human].
At the same time, the manager warns us that this magic can only deceive replica Yamato stone while the original which was present when we got out of the labyrinth back then and Status Check ability could see through it.
By the way, the AR shows me, [Tribe: Human][Tribe: Homonculus], when I look at Nana, while appraisal skill gives me, [Tribe: Human (Fake)].

For the time being, thanks to the manager and Nadi-san, the two got their ID safely. With this we'll be able to visit towns in the middle of our journey.
When we're waiting for the ID to finish, the manager gives me a bag containing money while saying, "Nn".

"Please use this for Mia's travel expense. Though it's only a little since it's manager's secret saving."
"Said too much."

The manager complains with the added information from Nadi-san.

"I'll gratefully receive it."

I receive it and put it on the pouch.
We don't particularly need it, but it would be rude to decline this. I'll give it all to Mia later.
I promise the manager and Nadi-san who see us to send them a letter when we get to the forest.

The wagon advances through the same road as yesterday.

I pray for this to become a peaceful journey with nothing happening, and the wagon continues one while rattling.

# Intermission: At Territorial Army

*

I hear rustling noise of equipments.
Uuu~, the break is already over huh.

The punctual Iona hasn't woke me up, which mean there's still time. I'll enjoy dozing off for a little more.

"Guhaaa!"

What are you doing to a helpless beautiful girl.
A chain mail is suddenly thrown onto my stomach, I get up while moving it aside.

"Hey Ruu. Wake me up more gently."

I complain to the only possible culprit, Ruu.
Iona and Zena-chi never do it like this.

"Just get up already. You're running out of the time to take a meal you know."

What!? I can't let that happen.
I get up and wash my face. Since it's troublesome to use the ladle, I draw water from water basin to the jug directly. If Iona and Zena-chi found out about this, they'd scold me.

"What's on the menu today?"
"Seems black bread and stew."
"Eeeh~ I'd like goat meat or steak sometimes."
"What's with those luxuries, even captain-class doesn't get them."

I amuse myself with the chats while wiping my face with my favorite

towel.

"If I became a mistress of a noble, would I be able to eat them everyday~?"
"Nowadays, looks like even nobles have it rough, so you probably won't get many delicious things too?"

Iona doesn't dream big eh~ even though she's from a branch family of a noble. Guess that's why her excitement has been dulled~

I throw my pajama which is a knee-length shirt on top of the bed, and take out an underwear and armors from my own shelf.

"Oi, Lilio. Don't show me your dirty ass."
"What a rude thing to say~ even though it's this cute."

You don't have to see it, Ruu.
It's not like I like I'm an exhibitionist, so I wear my underwear. I'm wearing a short shirt on my top. Ruu and Iona wear breast wraps. Unfortunately, me and Zena-chi don't have much need for ones.
Of course I'd wear a cute shirt and breast wrap when I go on a date, but that's only if I have a boyfriend. I wear armor on the top anyway, it'd only be painful to wear an unneeded breast wrap.

After I finish wearing the chain mail, I put on the sturdy metal-reinforced leather boots and Zena-chi comes just right after.

Ara, how cute.
What she's wearing is Iona's if I'm not mistaken, with lots of frills, Iona's charm point is how showy she is. Isn't that the clothes she was boasting about when she bought it after saving up for half a year.
Good grief, everyone is sweet to Zena-chi.

I've thought that Zena's done changing and have taken a seat on the cafeteria already, but wearing that clothes, don't tell me.

"Zena-chi, you had a date with the boy right?"
"Da... n, no. He was worried about something so we were just having a talk."

That's what you call a date.
Still, seeing your beloved while lacking sleep due to the current overloaded working condition, how lovable.

"Lilio, your hands have stopped. If you don't change fast, you'll really miss your meal you know?"
"Hoo~i."

Reproved by Iona, I continue wearing my clothes.
Zena-chi folds a pink stole really carefully on top of the bed.

Oh?  Isn't that the newest color from Pinen clothing store from the center district?
Zena-chi is certainly a noble, but I don't think a daughter of a noble lineage could be that extravagant.

"Zena-chi, what's with that stole? Don't tell me, it's a gift from the boy?"
"Ehehe~."

Uwah, Zena's face is becoming lovestruck.

"I was given it by Satou-san. It was a product from Pinen-san's store Lilio told me back then~."

You're amazing, boy. Even cheap things in that place should be around 2-3 silver coins.
I wonder if he's a stupid son of a large store owner from somewhere?  I pray that Zena isn't being played.
She's taking off her clothes, and I let it slide when she stealthily unfasten

her breasts paddings. It was a date after all, some charms were needed for woman right.

"Zena-san, please change your clothes quickly too. Since we won't make it for the meal, do you want me to make some sandwiches?"
"No, I already had a meal, so I'm alright."
"Did you have a feast?! You had a feast right~~~."

After Zena-chi finished taking off her clothes, she gives it to Iona and she's closing on me while fetching her equipments.

"I did not. I just had some sweets while teaching Satou-san how to chant."

I am being dragged by Ruu and Iona to the cafeteria while Zena-chi is speaking fondly, "When I was going to sit down on a bench, he laid out a handkerchief on it you know."
Oh no, isn't that guy quite a playboy?

◇

The next day, I'd be on the bed all day since I'm off-duty, but I change my clothes and go out.

The sweets reserve in my room has ran out. Zena-chi is on duty today, and she's going to guard until midnight today just because she can use magic. Since it'd be pitiful if there's no sweets when she gets back, this kind Lilio-sama will buy it for her.

Well~, it's important for a popular woman to be attentive!

There's a familiar figure on the plaza in front of the castle.
It's the boy--- Zena-chi's beloved. He's wearing an expensive-looking

clothes like usual. Looks like he's back from shopping, he's carrying a lot of books.
If you buy that many, you could just hire a manservant.

Since my mischievous heart grows excited, I creep on his back and talk to him while imitating Zena.

"Hello, nimble Onii-san."

The boy turns around and speaks normally. Tsk, he's not surprised huh.

"Hello, Lilio-san. Did you imitate Zena-san?"
"Ehehe~ Did I pass? Hey hey, did you skip a beat?"

Ooh~ he remembers his girlfriend's best friend's name even though he meet me only once.  No~ It's hard to be beautiful~ What should I do if he's fallen for me.

"Are you alone today?"
"Yep, the other soldiers are sleeping~ But Zena, from yesterday noon until midnight today, is keeping on guard the who~le time. Magic troops are lacking in number isn't it."

It looks like he wants to talk with me, but it doesn't seems like he's going to seduce me. He's not making a pass to this beautiful me, that means maybe he's not flirtatious?
Since the topic is about Zena-chi.

"Lilio-san, could you deliver a message for Zena-san?"
"Okay~ But no passionate lines that would make chest hot okay? If it's too intense, it might be interpreted wrong you know~."

I don't want to whisper love words to Zena-chi. Although since we're in women barrack, something like that do occasionally happen, because we

live for friendship.

"I've decided to go to the labyrinth city for a business trip."

That's quite far. Isn't that on the far-most side of this country?

"Hee~ you're going on a long expedition again huh."
"Yes, I've stocked goods which are in shortage there."
"That so~, you're a merchant after all. When are you departing?"
"That, I plan to depart early morning tomorrow."

Acha~ Zena's first love end up unrequited huh~.
Let's treat her something next time.

"I understand, I'll properly convey it."
"Yes, I'm counting on you."

After saying so, the boy nods and leaves with a horse-drawn carriage away.

◇

When I get back to the barrack, everyone are gathering and having talks in the cafeteria. It's still a long time before the meal, is there something happening?
I ask the squad who are talking beside me.

"Yana-chi, did something happen?"
"Ah, Lilio, listen to this."

It's a good choice to ask Gayana-chi who loves to talk. They're told that the territorial army has announced the application for personnel

selection for deployment in the labyrinth city. The deployment is going to take two months.

But, even though they say that it's training, in actuality it's about hunting monsters in the haunts right?
I will absolutely pass on this~.

However, judging from the buzz around, there are a lot of people who want to go. It seems that they add one silver coins for each month on the pretext of training. It's an amount that couldn't be ignored for us, underpaid soldiers. Furthermore, looks like the sales of magic cores we get from the labyrinth will be split equally for soldiers.
The danger is great, but the return is just as big. Danger is everywhere anyway. Even a senior demon appeared recently during my normal duty in Seryuu duty. If the silver mask-sama hadn't arrived at that time, I would be six-feet under right now.

That reminds me, the boy is going to the labyrinth city.
This is just right, I could aid Zena-chi's love while getting rich, let's apply for the selection.
Since Zena-chi won't be back until midnight, let's talk to Ruu and Iona first. Ruu isn't going to complain as long as she could get stronger, and Iona is unexpectedly greedy, she should be easy to persuade.

I don't know if we'd get selected, but let's work hard~.

TLN: Since I'm not sure if we'll ever get Lilio and Iona's picture from the

LN, here are them from the manga version. The one with the two-handed sword is Iona, while Lilio is the one with the crossbow holding Zena back.
http://i.cubeupload.com/JsK8lz.jpg
http://i.cubeupload.com/Z6KRC8.jpg

TLN2: And before you ask; no, I won't scanlate or translate the manga. I'm sorry.

# Intermission: Labyrinth and Fairy

*

"Sensei! Houya and the others had gone to the goblin's nest!"

The one who boorishly breaks this elegant afternoon tea time is the home fairy (Brownie) entrusted with taking care of this ivy mansion, Giril. Giril who's usually very calm is panicking with popping eyes.

It's not the time for me to be so calm. I wear my familiar magic clothes made from Yuriha fiber and take my favorite cane with one hand, then I go out. At the outside, my attendant who has already completed his preparation, Dohar--a very sturdy Dwarf--accompanies me to the labyrinth on the outskirts of Selbira.

This comes a bit late, but I'm a nature art user who hails from Bornean forest and the one who has broken through level 50 after devoting myself for 500 years. The name is Trazayuya Bornean. Recently, I've been called elf sage instead of my name.

"Boss, the kids seem to have taken the chick kids."
"I see."
"It seems they want to be acknowledged by the chick kids."
"Let's hurry."
"Hei!"

The kids Dohar mentions are someones who have followed me here from Bornean forest, Houya-- Houlsetaya, along with 5 others young elves. They, who were level 5-6 when they first got here, have approached level 20 in rapid growth now. They're young ones with bright futures. Since there are a lot of elves who finish their lives uneventfully without even crossing level 10, they're worth to be specially mentioned. They're a bit thoughtless but it can't be helped since they're still young, being less than 300 years old. They will settle down with time.

They'll grow up, become more discreet, before long they will pass over me, and if they gain influence in the world, the elves position will also go up. That is my very wish. To have the elves regain back the leadership of the world is my dream.

At the end of last month, around 15 young elves had come asking for my guidance, I wondered if the news about the kids' rapid growth had traveled to the hometown. They're clearly younger than Houya and the others. The youngest one is my distant nephew, Yusalatouya, at only 150 years old.

I've thought of making them into a group of five people and let Dohar makes them get accustomed with the labyrinth but it seems that Houya and the others have taken them to the labyrinth to brag themselves. Another reason is probably the fair-looking Lulilutoa who's also a master of Lute-playing being one those who've arrived recently. Appealing to women is a common thing regardless of age or race after all.

Dohar shows his red metal explorer plate to the gatekeeper who guards the entrance to the labyrinth on the west side of Selbira. That gatekeeper has known us since he was a new recruit, but he has never not checked for the plate for the past 20 years. It's quite commendable, but since right now I'm worried with the safety of the young ones, I can't help but feel annoyed. I'm still lacking in discipline.

After we're finished with the checking, we descend the stairway to come into semi-basement and continue through the passage. The passage is 10 meter wide and 5 meter high which meanders for about 2 Km. They made it to be twisted so when monsters overflow from the labyrinth, they would be slowed down.
One meter above is the ceiling that acts like dormer window that could be opened, while soldiers are patrolling outside. This 2 kilometers passage are used to preemptively shoot to death monsters which could come out overflowing from the labyrinth.

Thanks to this, "Passage of Death", the labyrinth's monsters have never got to Selbira.

Dohar and I begin to run while calming down my restless mind. I don't want to get mistaken with monster if I carelessly make noise in this passage. It's especially dangerous for Dohar since he's short.

Dohar opens the labyrinth's gate after we finally arrive there. I'm powerless against this heavy gate.

◇

"The kids are going to sweep the goblin's nest, they said."
"I understand."

There are many goblin's nest inside this labyrinth, but they probably went to the so-called fairy area infested with plant monsters, an unpopular area.
Ones will have to defeat the troublesome plant monsters, because they act as obstacles, to get to the goblins' location. Plant monsters have high stamina, and they're hard to deal without someone with fire magic in your party. And even if you defeat them, their magic cores are buried deep in the ground, it's not possible to dig out. They're monsters that embody the saying, "Great pains but all in vain." Since it's not worth the effort, the cores are rare to come by as alchemy materials.
Making use of their unpopularity, I made a tunnel straight to that goblin's place using nature art and alchemy to act as an exclusive hunting ground for the young elves.

I've planted Gabo fruits for the goblin's welfare and breeding and eliminated other monsters beside goblins with Dohar.
Now then, I've called them goblins so far, but the ones in this labyrinth

are not the wicked fairy goblins but pseudo-goblins that have magic cores inside their body. The wicked fairy goblins have dark green body and bleed red blood, they're fairies who are hated everywhere while the pseudo-goblins can't speak, have dark body and bleed green blood, they're genuine monsters.
The wicked fairy goblins don't exist in this continent for 200 years except in one region, since they are hunted all the same with the pseudo-goblins. Therefore, ironically, what most people refer as goblins are actually pseudo-goblins.

◇

Dohar takes care of monsters who occasionally appear in one blow with his battle axe. He's already working as my attendant for nearly 100 years. He was overjoyed as he recently had managed to break through level 40, passing his father.

"Boss, it's basilisk."
"I understand. ■■■ Magic Arrow."

I unleash 21 magic arrows toward the basilisk appearing from the back. There are 21 magic arrows, where usually even one is hard to resist. The basilisk becomes pieces of meats without being able to do anything.

"Is it a stray?"
"Yes, basilisks usually appear 5 level below. Some stupid young explorers who overestimated their abilities most likely had gone to the depth and drew one here."
"You're right."

This is troubling. Low level people won't be able to resist Basilisk petrification. The one we encountered just now was just a lower basilisk

so it couldn't turn someone into stone, but I don't know if they could take its stare without getting their hearts stopped.

Near the end of the tunnel, we meet a herd of goblins. They're only level 1-3 but it's a herd consisting of around 30 monsters. It's annoying to wait for Dohar defeating them so I provide assistance with magic arrow.

"Boss, for the goblins to appear around this place, that means-"
"Umu."

I briefly answered Dohar's guess. I've scattered medicine that would make goblins think there are strong monsters so they don't go near the tunnel entrance. If they go far past it, then that means the foods don't suffice.

"This is bad."
"Yea, the kids 'ere in danger if we don't get to 'em fast."

The labyrinth monsters periodically enter breeding season. Goblin's period is short, but in exchange their propagation rate rarely change. However their propagation rate is huge, so it can't be helped if there's a calculation error.

...I remember something unpleasant. Last month, Giril mentioned that the reserve Gabo seeds in the storehouse had gone. The storehouse wasn't locked so poor people occasionally stole Gabo fruit from there, so I had just thought, "Again huh", when I heard it.
I've left the job of sowing Gabo seeds here to Houya and the others, but I wonder if they properly follow my order to do it with one small bag? If they sowed the three small-barrels worth of Gabo seeds that were in the storehouse...

I must hurry. If my prediction is true, the goblins may have started breeding explosion. If it really happens then 30 baby goblins could be born by eating the stomach of their mother goblin. And then the children

would start breeding again in two weeks. If we're unlucky, we might be facing ten of thousands goblins.

When we finally arrive at an open space, countless bodies of goblins and three dead bodies of the young elves come into our views.

"Regrettable."
"Boss, please save the remorse until we get out of the labyrinth."

I accept Dohar's advice and advance forward.
We smash through the goblins that have clogged up the tunnel. Since we can't avoid the plant monsters, I use nature art <<Enhance Sharp Edge>> on Dohar's battle axe and continue on while he's cutting them.

We finally arrive at a location that could only be called painting from hell littered with corpses as far as eyes can see.
While clearing the goblins corpses with magic and a thin sword, I see the tragic corpses of the young elves full of goblin's teeth marks.

I call the young ones' name several times.

However, no one answers back. Whenever Dohar swings his battle axe, the goblin corpses increase. I deal with three goblins who rush towards me by deploying the <<Floating Wheel>> for my self-protection.

Boom, we hear explosion sounds from the back of the room.

"Dohar."
"Yea, boss."

We act in harmony, making ways through the sea of goblin to the place where the sound comes from.
To back Dohar, I give him reinforcement magic. They're Strength and Dancing Blade.

Strength multiply Dohar's strength several folds allowing him to tear through goblins like a tornado. Dancing Blades is small blades that arbitrarily fly around the target while cutting up enemies with forces. It can be said that Dancing Blades is useless in a labyrinth, but it shows matchless power if the opponents are goblins.

"Houya, Lua."

Lua is smiling weakly hearing my call. Her beautiful transparent green hair has been dirtied with goblins' blood in spots. Still, I'm glad that she's alive.
Houya's explosion magic mowed down several dozens of goblins who had tried to crushingly surround them to death. Even so, there are still hundreds of goblins in front of us.

"■■■ ■ ■■■■■■■■■"

I begin chanting the highest order of nature magic. I've only ever used this when I fought a Lesser Dragon in my life. It's wasteful using this on goblins, but this is the best magic to safely defeat large number of enemies.

"■■■ ■ ■■■■■■■ ■■■"

What cruelty! Lua has lost her left arm. It could be said that this is a world's loss as her lute playing tones can't be heard anymore.

"■■■ ■ ■■■■ Wild Dancing of Void Spears <<Multiple Javelins>>"

Unseen spears are pouring unto the enemies like downpour. Amidst Dohar who's cutting up the enemies and without injuring Houya and the others, it changes hundreds of goblins into corpses.

I've not only saved Houya and Lua. Beautiful Lua has protected my distant

nephew, Yusalatouya, on her back even while losing one of her arm. The young Yuya is unconscious but I give him an emergency treatment and carry him and Lua together with self-propelled stretcher <<Floating Stretcher>>.

◇

After we've returned, we immediately look for a high-ranking Garleon priest, and ask him to use healing magic. Unfortunately, the recovery for Lua's left arm didn't go well. Until I complete an artificial arm indistinguishable with the real one in the future, Lua must bear through the hardship.

Giril found cold body of Houya on the next day, he most likely felt responsible for the disaster, letting the guilt got into him.

I bring Lua and Yuya back to Bornean forest, taking the blame, two-third of the congress is in agreement to exile me.
Even though I've been away from the forest for a long time, it's sad to be chased away from your hometown. However, the lost of many young people will result in generations without children for dozens, or even hundreds of years. It might be a fitting punishment for someone who has created this racial crisis like me.

As a sole atonement, I will create a pseudo-labyrinth for the sake of elves' growth without the danger like in this disaster. I vow to dedicate my life to build a place for training without the danger of losing lives, for the future of young elves.
I dream of bustling figures of young elves who devote themselves with studying in my maze, someday.
And, I believe in the future where the elves lead the world again.

I am Trazayuya Bornean. One foolish elf man who had scattered the lives of many young lives.

Even so, I cannot abandon my dream.

# Intermission: Tama

*

Wagahai is Tama de Aru[1], the name given by master.

Tama has a family nyan.
A really strong and kind master, and Pochi who's like a little sister and Liza who's like a mother. And also cheeky Arisa and docile Lulu. Everyone is not a cat-person, but they're all important family nyan.

Arisa said that if I use, "Nyan, master will be happy, but it's a lie. Far from being happy, he's worried instead.

"Okay~ Here we go~. Everyone, follow me~."

Arisa is leading the way while running. Today is a shopping day.
New clothes! Fluttering and fluffy, cute clothes with no weird smell.

"If Pochi was to wear this clothes then Tama would be cool with this sharp one I guess?"
"This ribbon is better~?"

Not the one that Arisa recommends, but the matching one with Pochi with a small ribbon attached is what I want.

"Ara? That's unexpected, you like cute things huh~."

I don't know how to use money, so it's Arisa who buy it.

After the shopping is over, we eat a lot and lot of meats with the leftover money. I am very happy.
We pass by a park, I see a nice sunny spot for napping, then I notice master there.

"Master~?"

I run to him to talk, he looks in pain somewhere.
Pochi who runs with me together looks worried too.

"Tummy hurt~?"
"I'm alright, I might be tired though."

Master says so while patting my head. I want to be patted more, I rub my head against master's hand.

◇

The outside! I'm going outside the city for the first time.
Arisa asks, "Didn't you live outside the city when you were small?", but I only remember the winter chill and the warmth of someone's fur.
Alhough I clearly remember the time when I met Pochi, I don't really remember past things.

Pochi wasn't able to speak words and just groaned with, "Gururu~", but I worked hard to teach her words. Since I'm the onee-chan.

The wagon is shaking here and there, it's fun. Since Arisa and Lulu cry their butts hurt, I ask, "Are you okay~?". Arisa screams back, "Nothing is impossible with human's intelligence!", but I don't really understand the meaning. Arisa's words are fun, but I always don't understand them. She's a strange child.

Arisa teaches me many things. [Janken], [Guppa], [Hopping], [Card play], [Anisong], a lot, lots of things.
Next time, if I catch a prey, I'll give it to Arisa.

The scenery is flowing while I'm sitting beside master, it's fun. Pochi also sits beside master on the other side.

"Nya!"

Just now, a prey is in that thicket!
I tried to jump out, but Liza gripped my girdle so I wasn't able to jump out. Too bad.

The wagon shakes and Arisa complains. Even though wagons are for shaking things, Arisa is really strange.
Pochi counterattacks Arisa who rides on her head. Uu~ I want to join in.
But, I'm the onee-chan so I'll endure. Uu~, endure... impossble nyan♪

I play with Pochi and Arisa until Liza stops us.

◇

Uu~, I catch glimpse of many preys.
But, until master has ordered me, endure it, endure.

"Private Pochi! Private Tama!"
"Ay!"
"Yes nanodesu!"

I take on the pose Arisa has taught yesterday, "Swoosh!", and answer master.

"I will assign you two a mission! Check the security around the perimeter of the boulders!"
"Ay!""Desu!"

I chase after a rabbit that I've had my eyes on since earlier with Pochi.

The rabbit is hopping around with, "Pyon pyon"-like sound.
Pochi and me are running together.

It's slower than monsters nyan.

I throw myself.

Pyon pyon.

Nyau, it ran away.

Pyo~n.

Pochi jumps on it.

The rabbit twists its body and slips underneath Pochi.

I won't let you run!

Tou!

But the rabbit dives into a hole hidden in the grass' shadow.
Uu~, if I go there, the clothes given by master will be dirtied.

However, Pochi plunges into the hole without hesitation.
I'm the onee-chan after all, I'll give this rabbit to Pochi.

I catch a snake loitering around under the rock. It's a snake with no poison and delicious.
But, it's a bit small. I look for the next prey while twirling my tail around, and come across Arisa who's looking for firewoods.

"Arisa~?"
"Ara, Tama. Hmm? What are you holding?"
"Snake~"

That's right, let's give it to Arisa.
It's a bit small, but it's good for snacks.

"For you~?"
"Wa, no, don't come here."
"Not poison~?"

Even though it's not a snake with poison, so it's fine.
Now, Arisa, go ahead and chew it from the head without reserve.

"Wa, toss it away."
"Pow~?"
"Yes, turn around. spin and spin~, then throw it with a pow."
"Ay~."

As Arisa says, I spin and spin~ and throw it.
Seems that it's a new play, but I don't understand the fun.

"Yes, that's good."

Arisa crosses her arms and nods with, uh-huh. Seems it was correct.
Arisa pick a firewood on her foot and go back to master.

Next, for the sake of master, I'll look for a bigger prey.

I chase after a dragonfly.

I chase after a cricket.

I found it.

Conceal myself~, tou!

I pin the prey from behind, and it faints just from that.

Weak~?

Even though it's a present for master, but I'm told, "Let it go."
Even though, it's a big prey~.

But, it's an order from master, Tama will listen to what he says.
I spin and spin~ like Arisa taught me and toss it away.

I was scolded by master.

I must tell Arisa that it's bad to lie.
Because I'm the onee-chan.

5.3

1 TLN: This is impossible to tl for me without losing the humor, yes she's mimicking the demon wagahai-kun. Dearu is like nanodesu, no particular meaning and definitely not her name. :p
Apparently the author is referencing to a famous Japanese work
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Am_a_Cat

# Intermission: The Work of Manager-san

*

<Author's Note: From the point of view of the worker's guild elf manager.>

My name is Yusala Touya, an elf who was born in Bornean forest.

"Manager, the preparation is complete."

The one who calls me is the sole employee of my shop, the small Nadi.
Although she wasn't even as tall as my knee when I first met her, she's grown taller than me before I knew it.
Human grows fast.

"Let's go."

She answers me with an energetic, "Yes!", and carries the big rucksack below her feet on her shoulder.
She presents another medium-sized rucksack below her to me while smiling.
That's my share of luggage huh.

"Laborer."
"We can't. We don't have extra money for that."

I tried to tell her that I wanted to hire a laborer to carry the luggage, but it was rejected. Since she's in charge of the shop's accounting, I can't push it too much.

It can't be helped, I put my favorite staff in the rucksack, and shoulder it.

"I've put manager's favorite dried fig in the bento, so let's do this energetically!"

Hou, it's quite rare for the economical Nadi to look out for others.

My lips gets slightly loose. Since the sharp-sighted Nadi grins when she quickly sees it, I tighten it hard.

◇

"Let's enter the mountain from around this area."

Nadi says so while showing the map to me.
We tie the horses that we rode here on trees. Just in case, I sprinkle medicines to ward monsters around them.

We're in the middle of a job from a merchant boy called Satou to deliver an item for the ashgrey ratkin people who live on an undeveloped land deep in the mountain.
Normally, I wouldn't take such annoying job, but since he's taking care a girl from my race, I couldn't decline it.
Rather than saying I cannot decline, normally I should've taken this job free of charge.
But a good-hearted person he is, he requested the job formally. Moreover, he gave three gold coins
as the payment. I wanted to tell that I didn't need the money, but Nadi quickly blocked my mouth and I was stopped.

"Manager?"
"Sorry."

I lost in thought for a bit.

"Then, please."
"Umu."

I use the secret art for walking in the forest.

"■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■■■ Wood Walk"

Green aura wraps Nadi and me.
It's been awhile since I use this magic.

While we're advancing through the forest in these states, branches and weeds as tall as grown man avert themselves from us.

"This magic is really amazing, no matter how many time I see it."
"Is that so."

I feel slightly embarrassed from Nadi's straight praise.
As a nihilistic grown man, I have to remain expressionless.
I guide Nadi while we continue advancing the mountain path. Since obstacles are avoiding themselves from us, it's no different than walking in a highway.

"Ah, that's the firefly lily of the valley flower!"
"We can't."

Yes, while we're using this magic, we cannot hurt creatures of the forest. Once we do, the magic won't be usable for a season.

"So it's like that, aah, even though we could get five gold coins from the alchemy shop with that flower."

I lead Nadi who keeps staring at the flower in regret by hand, and advance ahead.
I wonder if there was a big monster that passed here, I catch sights of rocks and trees that are gouged unnaturally. Did some kind of high level monster have settled down in this forest?

I was going to use magic to check it, but then I noticed that my hand was

still joined with Nadi's. I want to separate our hands, but she doesn't let it go.

"Nadi?"
"Err, there, it's separated."

It's rare for the intelligent her. She's really interested with the flower before is she.
I'm worried with her condition, but I have to confirm the safety first.

"■■■ ■■■ ■■■■■ ■■ Forest Whisper <<Natural Whisper>>"

The magic spreads through the forest.

『Did some new monster spring up in the forest?』
『Yes, a lot.』
『They're no more.』
『No more.』
『Hero.』
『Was here.』
『Night.』
『Running.』
『Flying.』
『Exterminated the great wild boar.』

The forest little echoes continue to echo.
A hero in such remote forest? There should be some rumor if it was the Saga empire hero, but maybe a hero appeared among the ashgrey ratkin?
I'm slightly interested with it, but since it doesn't seem to be a monster, there's probably no danger.

◇

We finally arrive at the ratkin settlements in the noon, but unfortunately, looks like we're not really welcomed.

The problem is I don't understand their words. Since I'm told that they saved Mia, I thought that they can speak elf language, but my expectation is off.

"How about it?"
"Yes, it's similar to weaselkin language. There are also some that are similar with elf language."

Nadi is speaking in guess while grabbing the cuff of my clothes.
Although I've heard that she's good with language, to be able to interact using unfamiliar language like this, she's truly capable.

I'd like to use the nature magic [Translate] that my granduncle used but I don't have it, it's impossible with my level.

I watch over Nadi who's negotiating.
In the worst case, we might have to push them the memento at least and go back.

The surrounding ratkin people become slightly noisier. Did Nadi make wrong expressions?
Un?  My feet is being shaken.
When I look down, the ratkin little children are coiling around the luggage that Nadi and me have put on the ground. Since their noses are twitching, are they smelling something good?

I slowly squat down while being careful as to not stimulate the surrounding and open the big rucksack.
Strong smell spread. This bundle have croquettes huh.
Apparently, the children are interested with this smell. I don't know

what's so good with this oily thing, but it's also popular in the city.
Nadi probably has brought it for her lunch, but let's use these to build friendship with them.
There are 10 croquettes in the bundle. There are 18 children huh.
I break the croquettes in half, and share it with the children.

When that happen, several ratkins who look like the mothers appear from the gap between the soldiers, and each of them carries 3-4 children who keep on chewing the croquettes to behind the men.
I give the last one to the ratkin who look here so wistfully. I saw a slightly appealing glance from Nadi. I'll divide you the dried fig later, so don't get mad.

I don't know if the croquettes succeed as the go-between, but since a ratkin that seem to be the patriarch who understand Shiga kingdom language comes, the goal is complete somehow.

◇

"I see, so my brother has died."
"According to the person who was present on his last moment, it was a heroic death."

The patriarch says so as he holds the red helmet from among the memento I've handed. I can feel deep sorrow dwelling on his words.
When I was about to say thanks for saving Mia, and farewell, Nadi cuts in.

"Patriarch-san, why is only the forest around here dying?"
"I don't know the reason, but they've begun to wither since half a year ago."

I see, I understand what Nadi is trying to say. It's not enough with just thank you words.
I go out of the patriarch's straw-thatched roof tree house, and use a magic.

"■■ ■.....■ ■ ■ ■■■■■ Summon Forest Maiden (Summon Dryad)"

In accordance to my spell, the spirit of this mountain forest responds.
It looks like a little girl with green hair.

"I have something to ask."
"Elf! It's been awhile."
"Mountain forest."
"Do you want to know why the mountain dies?"
"That's right."
"The reason why the mountain die is~ because a human tried to forcibly operate the ruin."

According to the Dryad's story, it looks like it's because granduncle Touya's ruin has absorbed the earth veins around here. How can that be.

"Measures."
"It's alright. The ruin has stopped anyway, and I've taken a lot of mana from a cute child."

Due to the stimulation of that mana, it looks like she's succeeded in drawing power from far away earth veins.
Even though she looks like that, she's lived for a lot longer than me.

"Thank you very much."
"It's fine~, see ya."

The dryad went to the other side of the summoning circle while saying that.

It's already been resolved.

Since I talked with the dryad in elf language, I tell the content of the conversation to the patriarch and Nadi.
I wonder if my story is difficult, Nadi somehow interprets it for the patriarch.

"Oooh, the village is saved."
"I'm glad for you patriarch-san."
"Yes, we won't have to move to a different mountain now."

The patriarch firmly grabs my hand, and says thanks many times over.
Even though I did nothing.

"Isn't it because you use magic to identify the cause, and report that it's fine already right."
"Is that so."

Now then, the job is over.
I want to go back to the city, and take a nap on the usual sofa.

# Intermission: Young Merchant and Orphanage Children

*

When I went to an orphanage on an errand of my employer, I saw little children playing cards. Those cards are exactly like the learning cards that I've made. However, the designs are slightly different.

"Hey, you guys, where did you get those cards?"
"Tsui-niichan made it."
"You're wrong, it was Yuni-ane who got it from her boyfriend."
"Etai-niichan drew the pictures."
"Tsui-niichan shaved the tree you know?"
"Yuni-ane taught us how to play."

The children answered my question in hoots. If you say it like that, I won't be able to hear it. Since the children began to quarrel, I arbitrated them in a hurry.
After asking for many times, I understand that, "They got the cards from the lover of the child called Yuni", "The child called Tsui supplied raw materials like wood blocks, ink, and brushes.", and "The child called Etai drew the pictures."

Since the learning card, including the prototype were bought by that merchant boy, he's probably the lover of that Yuni. The intelligent looking girl who was with her is probably Yuni.
I guess the children that he wanted to teach are this orphanage's kids huh.

That reminds me, the children said something that piqued me.

"What is the way to play?"

There's nothing like way to play for the cards I've made. You read the letter, and check the back of the card to see if you're correct, that's what the item only is.

"Like this!"
"You line them up."
"In turns."
"You guess the letter right~"
"It becomes yours."

The children speaks of in rapid succession. The "I want to tell"-thought overflow. I patiently listen to the children's words, and arrange them in my head.

You put 100 cards with the letter sides on top on the [Field], and if you can read the letter correctly to match the picture on the back, it become yours. The missed cards are sent to the [Graveyard], and if there are no more cards on the [Field], the cards on the [Graveyard] are put back on the [Field], and the play resumes. When the cards are all gone from the [Field], and the [Graveyard], the one who holds the most cards becomes [Scholar]--the winner.

"Amazing, to think of such play."
"That's right, Yuni-ane is amazing~"
"Didn't she say the amazing one was Aisa?"
"You're wrong, it's Tarisa."
"Wasn't it Maisa?"

I want to meet this child called Yuni. I ask if I can meet Yuni or the other two children.

"Yuni-ane is working."
"Tsui-niichan is also training right?"
"What about Etai-niichan?"

"In his room?"
"No, the elder said he was going to work in the field today."
"Gabo field?"
"No, he said mustard spinach."
"Then, he's at the red roof place."
"Uncle, I'll guide you there!"

U, uncle. Even though I'm still 20 years old.
While feeling hurt by the children's words, I follow them by hand.

◇

The children lead me to the place where 20 boys who are about 10 years older than the one who've lead me here are working in the fields.

The eldest-looking muscular boy looks suspiciously at me who've been guided by the children.

"Hey, nice to meet you, I'm a merchant called Neisen."
"What business does Merchant-sama want? Since the crops are the lord-sama's properties, we wont's sell it without permission y'know?"

I notice slightly sarcastic accent from his [Merchant], and [Sama]. I didn't come here to pick a fight with a child.

"It's not like that. I wanted to meet Etai-kun, and these children guided me."
"Etai is under that tree, fainting. Since he's useless, you can take him if you have some business. You kids, come here."

I thank the boy and go toward Etai-kun.
The children are caught by the boy, and got themselves to help weed the

grass. While slightly waving to the children, I talk to Etai-kun.

"Etai-kun, can I talk with you for a bit?"
"...Who? Are you?"
"Nice to meet you, I'm a merchant called Neisen."
"Haa, merchant-san, what are you...."

Looks like Etai-kun isn't good with conversations.

"Actually, it's about the picture you've drawn on the learning cards."
"Those are interesting right!"
"Yup, the child who thought that play is amazing."
"Everyone plays it all night."
"Did no one quarrel?"
"Anyone who does will be made to have the last turn."
"I see, that's a good decision. However, it's hard to wait your turns with just two learning cards sets right."
"No, we have four sets now."

I wasn't able to hide my surprise. It's only been eight days since the [Learning Cards] have been sold. To only take four days to make one set! Even though the painter whom I asked to produce the commercial cards took half a month to create one set...

"Did you draw it yourself?"
"No."

I breath a slight sigh of relief with that words. The reason was because it took several people to shorten the time. However, that thought is negated with the next words.

"I made the first two sets myself, but the other set was made with the help of other kids who were good at drawing. Thanks to that, we made one in a day."

◇

"Theo, Shual, Olio. This person has something to talk about."

Etai-kun leads me to a hut with three boys and girls. I promptly do self-introduction and get down to business.

"Can you guys draw pictures as good as Etai-kun?"
"That's right."
"Not as good as Etai-ani."
"Etai-niichan taught me~"

After each of them draws a picture, I start the talk.

"I want to employ you guys."
"I haven't properly learned the letters you know?"
"Is it my b, body?!"
"My breasts are still small, do you want to make me your mistress?"

I deny the children's off--the-mark replies, and I explain in detail.
I'm the original maker of this learning cards, and I want to spread it all over Shiga kingdom, not only in Seryuu city, so in order to make a lot of the learning cards, I'm going to employ them.

"How much will you give? Will you give one penny for one set?"
"You, that's too greedy."
"That's right, that'll become several copper coins in one month."
"How many will it become?"

The children's wages depend on their works, but the market price is around 1-2 copper coins in a month. In case of living-in, they normally

don't get wages.
I tell the children who have begun to count with their fingers the answer.

"If you can make 30 sets in one month, then that'll be 30 pennies, or six coins in copper coins."
"Four of us can make 40 sets."
"Then that'll be eight copper coins. Each person gets two copper coins."
"Amazing, that's about the same as Yuni-neechan."
"It's true, amazing."
"However, do we have that much materials?"
"I wonder if we can ask Tsui-niichan~?"

The children are fast to become excited, and depressed.
I don't intend to make them work that cheap, but since I don't have the fund for the start up, I'll compensate them later for the margin.

"I will prepare the materials of course."
"Really?!"
"Then, I'll make many."
"Un, I'll work hard~"

Among the children who are in high spirit, Etai-kun alone looks gloomy.

"But, is it fine to do it without permissions from Yuni and Tsui-niichan?"
"Oh right, they're the children who have brought the card, taught the play, and suggested the cards' production aren't they."
"Un."
"Do you know where they work at? I'll go and ask them. If I can't meet them, I'll go back at midnight."

I go out of the orphanage after hearing the workplaces of Yuni-chan and Tsui-kun. Since I've acquired informal consents from Etai-kun and the other children, I'll talk about it with the remaining two children. I must respect the fellowship of the children.

◇

First, I go to the Gate Inn where Yuni-chan is working. I have to persuade the girl as she's the one who created the idea of the play. If I just put a separate manual for that play, it'll surely sell.

"Okay."

I got permission from the inn's girl to talk to Yuni during her work, and the she readily replied it. The girl is different than my expectation. She's not that intelligent-looking beautiful girl, but an extremely common girl.

"The one who thought that play isn't me. It's by my friend called Arisa."
"Where should I go to meet her?"
"She's gone to the labyrinth city."
"I see, this is troubling."
"It's alright, that Arisa would say strange things like [There is no border for play] and would give you the permission."

That girl called Arisa seems like she has a hearty personality.

Since that girl has promised to send Yuni-chan a letter when she's arrived at the labyrinth city, I ask her to write this matter for the permission in the reply letter. It's going to be an approval after the fact, but let's work hard as to prevent it becoming a dispute.
Of course I won't be breaking any law even if I use it on my own accord, but to just use other's people idea like that, it's something frowned upon among merchants. Normally, the merchant guild becomes the mediator.

When I tell Yuni-chan that I will send the reply together with her letter, she accept while looking wholeheartedly happy.

◇

Lastly, I go toward the wood processing plant where Tsui-kun is working.
It's directly after the gate on the east street since it's related to woods transport.

"Okay."

I talked to him who's just taken a break, and he answered readily like Yuni-chan.
He replies while playing with the thin shaved wood wastes on his feet.

"It was originally things that Yuni brought anyway, I only got the woods since I wanted one for myself. I'd hate it if you're selling the the cards that are in the orphanage, but if you're selling newly made ones, I don't have any problem. Moreover, you're going to take Etai who's having problem getting works under your care right? It's impossible for that guy to become a soldier or a transporter after all."

He's unexpectedly quite responsible.

"I won't do anything bad to that boy Etai."
"Un, that guy is good at drawing pictures, but if you leave him alone, he'll draw until he collapses."

Tsui-kun nods that he wants me to tell him to be careful.
I should make an upper limit for the number of sets made in a month. If I don't put a limit, those children look like they'll work until they collapse.

When I see the plane and the thin shaved woods that Tsui-kun is holding, I remember certain words.

『What kind of idea are you going to make next? The demands seem to be there, it's the price afterward. Search for cheap materials, or way for cheap mass-production, the various trial-and-errors are fun right.』

I ruminate those words while staring at the wood chips.

"That's right, this is it."

I involuntarily stand up and shouts, the foremen on this place gather their eyes on me.
However, the excited me with the newly found idea doesn't mind those stares, and go negotiate with the boss-san. The thing that I've thought at this time takes form after half a year.
At this time, I thought of using the plywood made from wood chips and glue as the material for the cards, that wouldn't have happened without the great efforts and experiences of boss-san, and tsui-kun.

Learning cards that are made with latticed wood chips glued to become plywoods are worth 2 silver coins, it becomes souvenirs for people who visit this city for the labyrinth, and becomes well-known.

However, that's a story for later.

Until that, the days of making normal learning cards with wood blocks and barely scrap by to return the cost of the material continue for a while.
At this day, the best I can imagine is the figures of Etai and the others who are flustered for seeing a small bag full of copper coins at the end of the month.

# Intermission: Arisa's Master

*

Are you stupid?
Hey, let me say it once more. Are you stupid?

Reading the atmosphere, I stop those abusive words in my chest.
The object of those words is my [Master]. That powerful enemy is acting presumptuous because he's got that much monstrous power and now, he's challenging that.

You will absolutely lose I said, I know that you have secret unique skills, but your level is only 10, you know?
No matter how great your skills are, there's no way it could overcome 4 times level difference!

Moreover, he's hiding his skills even though his level is so low. I wouldn't know what kind of secret technique you've prepared!

"I won't hesitate to turn this into a bloodbath you know?"

The monster says so while pointing his cane to my master.

"It's no good! Master, this guy is too strong."
"Trashes don't have any place to call me 'this guy'."

Yes, I'm doing my best to call for [master's] attention, but the attack is coming here. Ah, this life is going to be over here huh. I want to flirt before I die~.

◇

I still remember the day I meet him.
I was in the shaking slave carriage that had just arrived in Seryuu city. It was depressing only looking at the gloomy slaves in the carriage.
At that time, I felt a gaze from somewhere, and he was there.

Black hair.

Black pupils.

Delicate build.

And, Japanese face.

Yes, [Love], it had been a long time since I saw my right-in-the-center type after seeing only macho in this world.
Particularly, the slightly unreliable easy-to-push-round look is nice. My creative impulse is welling up. My delusional power cannot be stopped, like that.
You seem to be wearing good clothes, why don't you buy me and Lulu.

I deliberately attempted to use chantless charm magic, but the carriage went to the road's corner.

◇

To protect me, [Master] charges toward the monster.

What, what's with that speed!
I thought he had just started to step forward, but he had already slipped into the monster's bosom, driving a blow.
I've seen my country's knight leader and hero having a bout before, he's faster than the hero's rush at that time. Yup, too fast.

But, the monster shrugs off that attack like it's a breeze. The monster completes its chant just like that, and flings the appearing shadow whips towards me.

I hope it's not instant death.

While thinking that, as my last resistance, I chantlessly fire Psycho Bullet toward the shadow whip, but it doesn't work well.
I wonder why did I read the book about mind magic when I was in the castle. If it was light or fire magic, I could retaliate this monster.

However, the shadow whip doesn't reach me. My [master] moves as if he's teleporting and receives the attack with his body.
Even though he's delicate, his back looks slightly wide, and relief surfaces along with anger in me.

Why are you acting so rash!

◇

The next time I met him was several days after. I remember the surrounding was noisy because the missing slave trader had came back.

Since a good customer is here, the expensive girls that would likely sells were to be shown in turns. Apparently the opponent was quite formidable, 10 girls had dejectedly returned.
And then, it's our turn, the six unpopular ones. If the girls before weren't selling, there's no way we would, curse.

And the one who's sitting in the sofa inside the tent is him. He's with three beast kin girls behind. Alright, I'll get his favor!

Nidoren, the slave trader, is saying something, but right now I'm putting power to my eyes!

But, the appeal from this beauty doesn't reach him, he almost leaves from the place. I become panicked and try to appeal with words. Fufufu, receive this appeal attack from me who's accustomed with job-hunting!

However, he's tough.
Even after I explain the merit and convey my feeling, he's completely unwavering.
Can't be helped, I'll use my last resort. I won't let this chance pass, even if it means I have to use heartless means!

Get shaken with chantless, [Charm Person], and [Fret].

Huh~?  It's not working.

The magic finally works after I use my trump card, Never Give up.
Who is this person?
His name is Satou, and his face looks Japanese, he must be a transported person right?

Well, let's be happy with this for now.
Fuffuffu, I won't let you sleep tonight.

◇

Something that looks like a joke is happening in front of my eyes.
Is he really a human? He grasp the supposedly untouchable magic restraints with his hands and tries to do something about it.

"It's hard to grasp even though it doesn't have reaction, this stupid <<fantasy>> things."

He really get away from the restraint even while complaining.
No no, you can't normally do that.

"What is your purpose?"

Mou, forget about purpose.
First of all, we should get away from here in order to live.

It's too bad, but let's give up on Mia.
Mia, I'm sorry. You can resent me however much. I'm helpless with my power.

"Do you have grudges with heroes?"
"Way off the mark."

The discussion breaks off, a lot of shadow whips are coming from under the monster's feet and go towards Mia.
He takes out two handguns from his pocket and shoots down the shadow whips.

Oh!  Cool~
Why doesn't this world have digital camera!

I'm having an out-of-place thought to escape from the stress from this hopeless situation.

◇

I've played a petty trick during our contract ceremony. I've mixed, [You

can approach me day and night.] With this, as long as master doesn't seriously order against it, it won't be considered a violation of contract.

I'm clever~♪  Arisa-chan great victory.

On the way back to the inn, interesting things keep piling up.

Itadakimasu?

Protein?

This person really is Satou-san huh?

Let's put aside such trivial things.

No matter what happen, tonight is my first night!
I haven't had first night in my previous life!
I'll fully demonstrate you my net knowledge, boy!

I enter the inn room while feeling excited.

We're in the same room.
I understand, boy. A 15 years old is at his peak of wanting it!

"Arisa and Lulu, you two can use that bed."

Does he want to attack us as set?
Lulu is pure, if possible, I want her to have normal loving one.

I was waiting for his attack, 'is it now', 'or now', but he was sleeping on the next bed.

IM-POS-SI-BLE!

I put Lulu to sleep with mind magic and crawl into master's bed.
I feel sorry, but I don't have any regret.

The result was utter failure, but turned out he really is a Japanese.
I don't know if he's a reincarnated or transported, but with that Japanese face, he's probably a transported one. Can't be sure with Lulu here though.

◇

"Arisa! When morning comes, go ask for assistance at the worker's guild manager."

Uwaah~, stupid stupid stupid.
I frantically jump to him who is sinking together with Mia into shadow portal.

But, I didn't reach him.
The shadows that come out slip and graze me.

"Arisa, let's take care of those for now."

Liza plunges toward three shadow stalkers alone.
Doing such reckless attack, even the usually calm Liza is greatly shaken.

While I fight the shadow stalkers with chantless shock wave, Pochi, Tama and Liza are supporting me.

Liza got hurt, but we somehow won.
I give Liza first-aid with the help of my previous life's memory, while Pochi and Tama are preparing the wagon.

I wanted to have Lulu to drive the wagon, but since she can't see well in the darkness, it'd be dangerous so I leave it to Liza and Tama.

"Master is alright nanodesu?"
"Come back~?"

I want to know that too!
But, as an adult woman I can't possibly slap nervous little girls.

"Of course, he' s alright. He's our master remember. Of course he's coming back!"

I declare so while convincing myself midway.
I won't ask him to be in one piece, but at least please come back alive!

◇

When we're waiting for the gate of Seryuu city to open, Tama begins making noise.

"Re~?"
"What's wrong nodesu."
"Master, there~!"

What did you say!

"Is that true, Tama!"

I press toward Tama.
Whoops, the wagon suddenly moves and I fall down.
Although she wasn't complaining before, Liza's eyes are looking very desperate.

This girl might be unexpectedly the most worried.

"He's there desu!"
"Sama~."
"Yeah, master. ...He's safe.

Pochi, and Tama, then Liza who has became emotional is choking her words.
Hey wait, where is he?

"Arisa, there. At hill on the road ahead, in white clothes."

He's there!
What are you doing so nonchalantly waving here.

"...I, I was worried! Mou, promise me to never do something that absurd ever again!!"

I shout and cry on his chest.
He's apologizing so many, many times, but he absolutely doesn't understand.

I will become strong.
To protect this stupid and reckless [Master] from jumping into dangerous situation!

I am Arisa.
Former Japanese, Tachibana Arisha
My love story won't lose to this absurd parallel world (fantasy)!

# Credits

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~ epub version 1.0 by bakanonymous ~